MICHAEL KINSLEY: WHY PEROT WAS RIGHT

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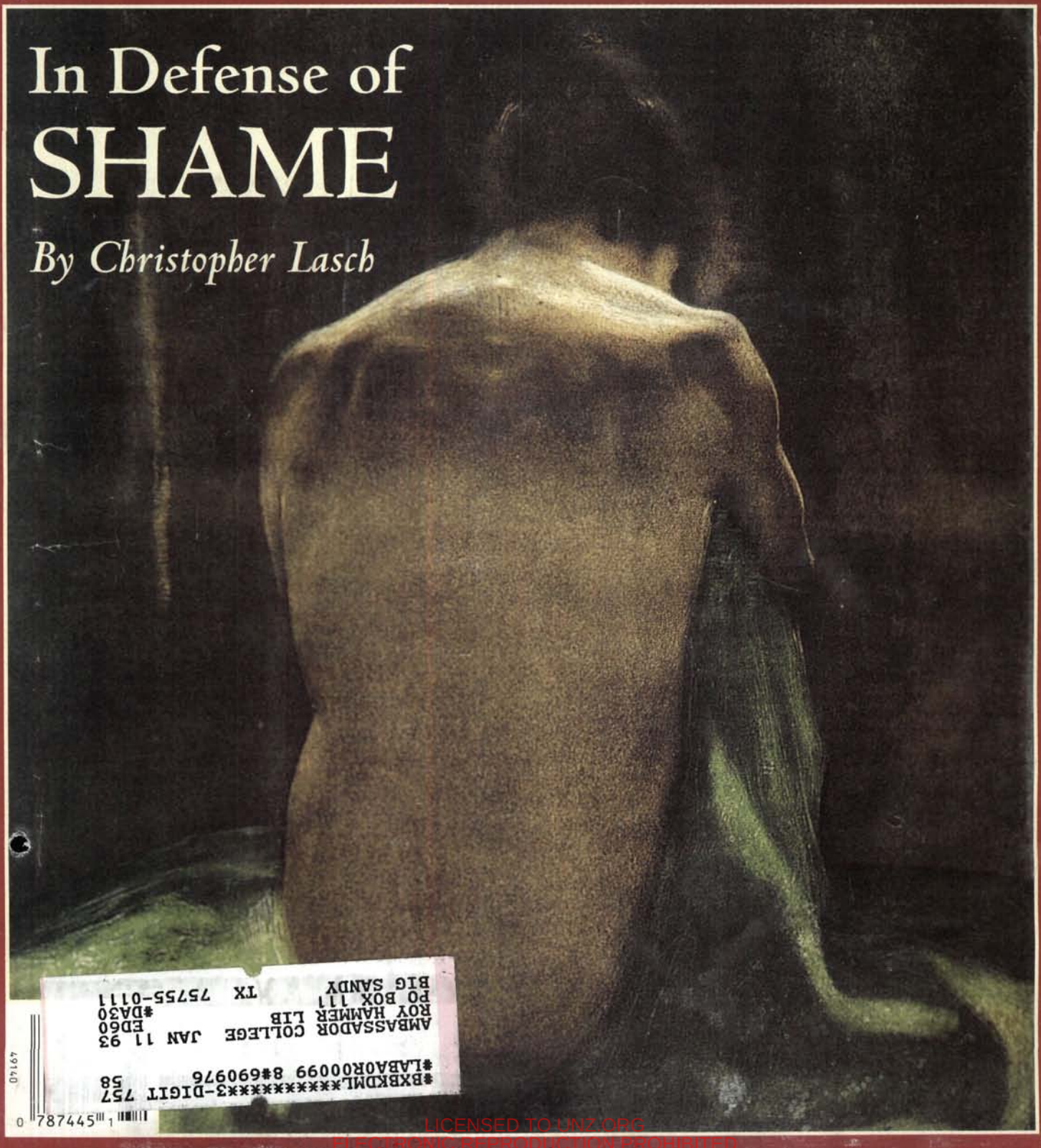

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AUGUST 10, 1992

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Cover by Käthe Kollwitz, "Female Nude with Green Shawl Seen from Behind" (1903), Kunsthalle Bremen. Article on page 29.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Warming to Cassandra

To the editors:

Gregg Easterbrook's cynical article about environmental hyperbole bore the curious headline "Green Cassandras" (July 6).

Cassandra was the daughter of Priam and Hecuba, King and Queen of Troy. She was also the lover of Apollo, the Greek god of wisdom, who endowed her with the gift of prophecy. After a stormy break-up, though, Apollo added the stipulation that nobody would believe her (still quite correct) predictions. Later, Cassandra accurately predicted the invasion of the Greeks, and ran through the streets of Troy shouting a futile warning. The Greeks thus took Troy by surprise, laying waste to the city and killing her father. Cassandra and her mother were abducted to Greece.

Ordinarily a fair environmental writer, Easterbrook casually dismisses the threats posed by carbon dioxide emissions and ozone depletion because the environmental movement's media campaigns are often more successful than expected. The South Polar ozone hole, he says, is little cause for alarm because down there, there is "little life to harm." There are some Chileans, Argentineans, Australians, and New Zealanders I'd like him to meet.

It would be a Greek tragedy indeed if Albert Gore, Barry Commoner, and other "enviros" did turn out to be latter-day Cassandras—their warnings of calamity sadly accurate but ignored. Did you intend your headline to have this ironic and Delphic implication? And considering what happened to Cassandra's fellow Trojans, might it not be wiser to heed the lessons of history rather than risk repeating them?

MICHAEL ALCAMO
New York, New York

To the editors:

It is unfair of Gregg Easterbrook to charge that environmental risks are manipulated for the sole benefit of environmental groups' annual fund-raising efforts. On the contrary, it appears that the Bush administration has had a large hand in making a melodrama and spectacle of environmental issues during this election year. Examples include the Endangered Species Act God Squad reducing protection of the Olympic Forest and Spotted Owl, the Environmental Protection Agency's limiting redefinition of wetlands within the Clean Water Act, and the efforts of the OMB and Competitiveness Council to freeze or gut many educational regulations.

It seems hasty and ambitious for Easterbrook to post environmental groups in a well-funded branch office of the status quo. At last count, environmental organizations received 1.5 percent of non-profit giving, hardly a large portion of the available funding. Also, the status quo in a changing world with growing populations and developing economics is not necessarily a strong position to hold. Often it is just a defensive position in a state of siege.

DAVID TODD
Austin, Texas

To the editors:

In "Rio-Con" (July 6) TNR tried to show that, contrary to press reports, the global warming treaty and other Rio agreements were improved by tough U.S. negotiators. Unfortunately, TNR can shine no brighter light on Bush's performance at Rio than can the administration.

Take global warming. Contrary to the article's implications, Europe's human-induced emissions (the only type controlled by the treaty) of methane are, per capita, less than one-third the United States's. Better explanations for Europe's focus on carbon dioxide emissions are: (1) carbon dioxide causes more than twice as much warming as methane; and (2) carbon dioxide emissions are easier to control and monitor. The treaty targets rejected by the United States *are* important. Without controls, carbon dioxide emissions are certain to increase, as even the administration recognizes.

Meeting the modest proposed Rio targets would not affect the U.S. economy disproportionately. In fact, recent studies, including one by the National Academy of Sciences and another by the congressional Office of Technology and Assessment, have concluded that reductions beyond those proposed for Rio could be achieved with a net benefit to the U.S. economy.

Finally, and most incredibly, TNR concludes that, overall, U.S. negotiators improved the global warming treaty. Thanks to the United States, the treaty mandates cuts neither in carbon dioxide nor any other greenhouse gas. The inclusion of methane and other greenhouse gases, it could be argued, only makes this toothless treaty weaker by permitting countries to substitute

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Edited by JOSEPH PECHMAN with the assistance of MICHAEL S. MCPHERSON

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reductions of methane or other hard-to-monitor greenhouse gases for much-needed reductions in carbon dioxide. Had the United States truly desired to improve and strengthen the treaty, it could (and should) have insisted that *each* greenhouse gas be reduced by a certain amount.

DONALD GOLDBERG
DAVID HUNTER
Center for International Environmental Law
Washington, D.C.

Policy of truth

To the editors:

In his review of Michael Shelden's biography of George Orwell ("Sense and Censorship," June 15) Michael Scammell makes shrewd comment on the roots of *1984* in Orwell's personal experience, and is correct in pointing out both Shelden's strong reliance on Bernard Crick's work and his "perfunctory" treatment of Orwell's two last books, arguably his masterworks. But the personal roots of *1984* are much stronger than he supposes.

In the last eighteen months there has been a stream of new information that transforms our understanding of *1984*. On the question of censorship, for example, it was the wartime government that banned *Animal Farm* in 1944, not the publishers. It also blocked many other Orwell works in that year, at one point going so far as to require the removal of pages by Orwell from a book that had been printed and bound and having other pages by some more compliant author inserted in their place. The man responsible for these acts has been identified, an official in the Ministry of Information, which was the model, incidentally, for the Ministry of Truth, not the BBC, to which it bears no resemblance.

A key element in Orwell's work has been its political dimension, epitomized in *1984*, yet the actual existence of a Brotherhood movement has gone unnoticed until now. A leading figure linked to the ideas of "Brotherhood" was an early mentor of Orwell's against hom he subsequently argued fiercely. A good case can be made for *1984* being, at one level, a continuation of this argument. And there is much more, including the most likely original of Julia.

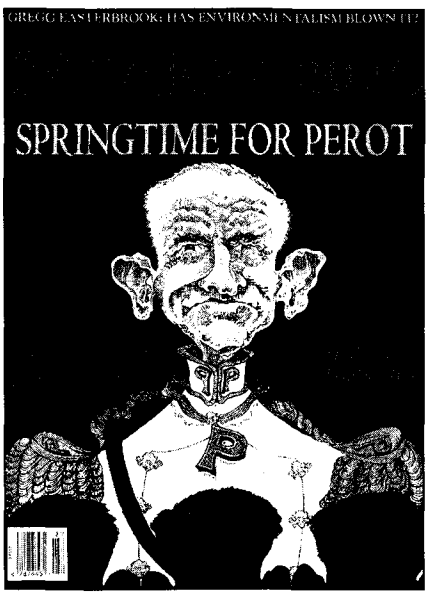
Scammell remarks in passing that Crick's biography was written only ten years ago. It is indeed sad that this full-length biography should appear so precipitately when this raft of new information has just surfaced, all unknown to Shelden, which will require much thought and discussion. Only then, perhaps, will a definitive view of Orwell's achievement, one of the most important in British letters this century, be possible.

W.J. WEST
Devon, Exeter, England

Bestial

To the editors:

In this day and age, I find it hard to believe that an editor of THE NEW REPUBLIC thinks that the model of a good presidential candidate's wife is one who intends to maintain "a silence on matters political"—and one who didn't even know that her husband was considering running for president until she heard it on the news (Washington Diarist, "Sacred Cow," June 22). Then Andrew Sullivan attacks Hillary Clinton because she is a "smart and articulate" woman who deigns to speak out about political matters, and Barbara Bush because she is a master of "frumpy do-goodery" who chooses to involve herself in problems like literacy. Are women who happen to be married to candidates supposed to forgo the rights of all citizens to voice their opinions on political issues and/or to engage in and promote volunteer activities as they choose? Does this gag and no public activity rule apply equally to all of a candidate's supporters and advisers?



JOY KAHN
Chevy Chase, Maryland

To the editors:

Please let me say at once that I am conscious of a great feeling of uneasiness at writing you. I must write, however, to tell you that Mr. Sullivan's shocking attack on our First Lady of the land is simply reprehensible and in horrible taste. I am quite sure I am not alone in disliking that scandalous screed on Mrs. George Bush. "Bestial" is how I described it to an elderly acquaintance. She also was very upset after I read to her the worst parts twice. (She's hard of hearing.) You maliciously fouled a great lady of America by deliberately printing that unfortunate claptrap about our beloved Bar.

EDNA WELTHORPE
Los Angeles, California

Anti-sleaze

To the editors:

I was somewhat taken aback by the item attacking me in your June 1 Notebook. I realize that in today's atmosphere it is relatively easy to conclude that anybody who works within the Beltway is, as your writer so quaintly puts it, a "sleazeball," but in my case, it just ain't so. Had your anonymous writer called me, he or she would have learned that though I was indeed engaged to do some public relations work for the Haitian interests friendly to the current government, I was not hired by the government either directly or indirectly. Rather, I was retained by an American law firm to assist in public relations work for a private Haitian client on a subcontract basis. Federal law requires that anyone who directly or indirectly disseminates "propaganda" on behalf of a foreign interest must register within ten days of beginning work.

A check with either the Department of Justice or with me would have revealed that I immediately notified the department of my intent to file and told them that registration papers would be filed as soon as my client returned from a trip to Haiti. Those who know me know that I have never done a dishonest or dishonorable thing in my life. In fact, I'm quite proud of the fact that your magazine noted some years ago that I actually resigned from a campaign rather than take on assignments that reeked of "sleaze."

CRAIGAN P. SHIRLEY
Alexandria, Virginia

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FROM WASHINGTON

H.R.P., R.I.P.

We're all having an excellent time snickering at Ross Perot: Mr. Tough Guy who ducked a fight, Mr. Take Charge who took a powder. But the joke may be on us.

Perot became convinced, apparently, that the economic plan he was about to reveal would never sell. He is probably right about that. It was a serious, honest proposal to deal with the federal budget deficit. His handlers were quite right to tell him that seriousness and honesty on that particular subject are a lethal combination. He would get the editorial writers' vote and lose everybody else's.

The details confirm the handlers' wisdom. Cancel the space station. Eliminate the ridiculous Rural Electrification Administration. Cut the White House and congressional staff budgets by 30 percent. Cancel big-ticket defense items such as the Sea Wolf submarine (which Bill Clinton hypocritically endorsed during the primary in Connecticut, where it's built). End subsidies to the rich by charging market-rate user fees for boats on inland waterways, private planes at government airports, mining and foresting on public lands. End the tobacco subsidy ($11 billion over five years) and slash away at other farm price supports.

Cut cost-of-living increases by a third for all Social Security, federal civilian, and military retirement programs (exempting the poor), and fully tax Social Security benefits of retirees with incomes more than $100,000. Make Medicare beneficiaries cover 35 percent of their doctor bills instead of 25 percent (still way less than the half that Medicare beneficiaries were originally expected to cover). Perot's plan called for $300 billion in entitlement cuts over five years. By comparison, Bill Clinton's plan calls for a token $4.4 billion over four years.

Tax increases: 50 cents a gallon on gasoline; $40 billion over five years on alcohol and tobacco. End the interest deduction on mortgages over $200,000. Cut the business entertainment deduction. The gasoline tax revenue would go into a trust fund for investment in public infrastructure: roads, airports, etc. Even so, Perot's plan would slash $700 billion to $800 billion from the deficit and credibly balance the budget over five years. By comparison Clinton proposes to halve the deficit in that period and George Bush's most recent budget projects a deficit of $188 billion in 1997 even if all his proposals are enacted and his rosy economic scenario comes to pass.

Perot's proposal isn't perfect. I could live without a lot of silly tax breaks for private investment in this and that. But I need to thank Ross Perot for dropping out and sparing me a tough question. If you think, as I do and others claim to, that the overwhelming issue this nation faces is the way it is eating its seed corn, how could you not vote for the only candidate proposing to address that issue seriously—whatever his other flaws?

Positions on issues are not the only consideration in choosing a president. Amorphous considerations like "character" and "temperament" obviously matter, and Perot had his problems in these areas. Yet such considerations have taken on an exaggerated importance in our politics because the most crucial issue has been taken off the table, at least in terms of serious and honest discussion. The Democrats don't want to talk entitlements, so they talk autobiography. Republicans talk family values to avoid talking fiscal math.

Perot was hoist by his own handlers. All he got for hiring expensive professionals like Ed Rollins was a lot of leaks to their friends in the press about how he wasn't doing what they told him and was therefore doomed. In fact, a hilarious change came over Perot's press coverage as soon as he signed up the pros. Suddenly he was being criticized for the very outsider qualities that previously had won him praise. Evans and Novak, who had been boosters, started warning darkly about the dangers of ignoring "the professional political managers." "Even today," they tsk-tsked on July 6, "there is no speechwriter, no advertising team...."

Rollins wanted Perot to hire advertising man Hal Riney, author of empty "feel good" commercials for Ronald Reagan in 1984, Bartles & Jaymes wine coolers, and suchlike products. Perot balked not only at the cost—$100,000 per commercial—but at the very idea of imagey, atmospheric commercials. He wanted commercials that actually talked about what he planned to do.

Writing in *Newsweek* after Perot pulled out, Rollins claims the candidate had said to him at the start, "OK ... you guys know how to do this. I'm getting out of your way," then he refused to get out of their way. No doubt Rollins had no such problem with Ronald Reagan. But what an absurd idea: that a candidate should "get out of the way" of his own campaign, so that political professionals can be unmolested in their efforts to portray him as a non-politician and take-charge guy.

And what is wrong with being reluctant to spend $100,000 on a campaign commercial? This is a man who wanted to balance the federal budget. Yet the pros' attitude seemed to be: spare no expense in portraying him as a tightwad. Revolutionize the government if you wish, but don't question the traditional way we run a campaign.

If I were Bill Clinton's campaign adviser, I couldn't honestly recommend honesty to him as a political strategy on economic matters. The Republicans have done too good a job at making fiscal honesty impossible. Clinton's budget proposals are just about as honest as he can be expected to get away with—and more honest than Bush's.

But if I were advising Ross Perot, I would have recommended honesty to him with a clean conscience. First, I would say, if anyone can get away with it, it's you. You can say, "I'm not going to lie to you like those (ugh) politicians. Here's the real, painful truth about the fiscal mess they've gotten us into and what it will take to get out of it." It might work. Second, I would say, why would you want to be elected without a mandate to do what you know needs doing? After all, you really aren't a politician like these other guys, running for office because that's the only reason they're alive.

Ross Perot chickened out. In the end, he didn't have the guts to tell the voters what he knows is the truth. After all that peacock strutting, he deserves the mockery he's coming in for now. But don't be too hard on the guy. Bush and Clinton also know the truth and are afraid to say it. They have chickened out too.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

AUGUST 10, 1992

MOMMA DEAREST

In culture this year, as in politics, the extremes are touching. The tribunes of the people have joined forces with the conglomerated princes of capitalist darkness to defend the right of Ice-T and Body Count to arouse their listeners with fantasies of cop-killing. Thus Barbara Ehrenreich, oddly conflating two Bob Dylan songs and mistaking "Cop Killer" for rap, writes in Time Warner's *Time* magazine that "you don't need a rap song to tell which way the wind is blowing," that is to say, the fury of the song has a basis in reality; and Gerald M. Levin, president and CEO of Time Warner and, it seems safe to say, something of a stranger to the streets, writes in *The Wall Street Journal* that "this song is rooted in the reality of the streets," and proceeds to call, as a witness for the defense of his corporation, Malcolm X. The comedy is delicious. If ever there was evidence that freedom of expression in this society will be defended in all its precincts, here it is.

The defenders of "Cop Killer," however, are having it a lot of ways. Because of its basis in the wretchedness of South-Central Los Angeles, "Cop Killer" should sound an alarm; and because "Cop Killer" is (in Ehrenreich's words) merely "hyperbole" and "boast" and "gesture," there is no need to be alarmed. Well, which is it? Is the inflammation real or isn't it? Of course, what Ehrenreich has inadvertently described is only the bad faith of a liberal and a rock fan, for whom black rage must be real enough to provide a thrill but not so real that it actually threatens anything. Thus she praises what she calls "the outlaw subcultures of rap and rock," which is about as incorrect and idealized a description of rap and rock as anyone has lately seen.

Nor is that all. How would—how did—some of Ice-T's defenders react, say, to the Willie Horton ad? Did they insist that there was an empirical basis for the white fears of crime upon which the ad preyed? Did they reassure the American electorate that the ad was only hyperbole and gesture, that there was no reason, therefore, to make a fuss? Of course not. They treated the symbol like the real thing. And, in a sense, they were right: not about the liberal refusal to speak candidly about crime, but about the power of symbols in politics and culture. All cultural expressions, after all, are gestures. None of the kisses or the bullets of American popular music, Body Count's included, is real. But symbols are real, which is why they influence thought, which influences behavior.

No, Ice-T has not killed a cop, and neither has anybody else killed a cop in the name of Ice-T's song. But those who wish that such a song, and more generally American popular culture, be taken seriously had better take it seriously themselves. There is a picture of a world in this song, a picture of the inner-city world and the courses of action that are available to its inhabitants. It makes emotional recommendations. (Consider only the chorus: "COP KILLER, it's better you than me / COP KILLER, fuck police brutality! / COP KILLER, I know your family's grievin' / (FUCK 'EM!) / COP KILLER, but tonight we get even".) When the peddler of rage from the record company writes that "it doesn't incite or glorify violence," he is lying, or at least disqualifying himself from the business of music criticism. The song certainly does incite and glorify violence. If it didn't, it would be only second-rate speed-metal that nobody would buy or discuss.

We do not believe that the record should be withdrawn from the stores, or that censorship of any kind would improve anything in any way. But the contents of American culture cannot be hidden behind the freedom of American culture. For culture brings news. Consider another song on Ice-T's record, called "Momma's Gotta Die Tonight." Here the singer tells the story of his own disgust at his own mother's hatred of white people: "She taught me hate for race.... She taught me bad things, 'Don't trust white people.'" The pure and sorely needed air of tolerance, it would seem—but then "mutha" rejects the singer's white girlfriend, and a rejection of racism gives way to an exaltation of murder. "I found out my mutha was an evil woman ... So I got some lighter fluid ... and I set her on fire! Ha, ha, ha. Burn momma, burn momma, burn momma, burn bitch, burn, burn, burrrrn. Ha, ha, ha. Burn you racist bitch...." After which our hero grabs a carving knife and cuts her almost dead body into pieces.

Is the freedom to make such a song all that needs to be remarked about it, or should we also make mention of its cynicism and its pornography of violence? Of course we must hear the news that culture brings. But then we must engage it, and challenge it, as citizens of an open society do. To defend freedom, you must also defend foulness; and then you must acknowledge that it is foulness that you are defending. •

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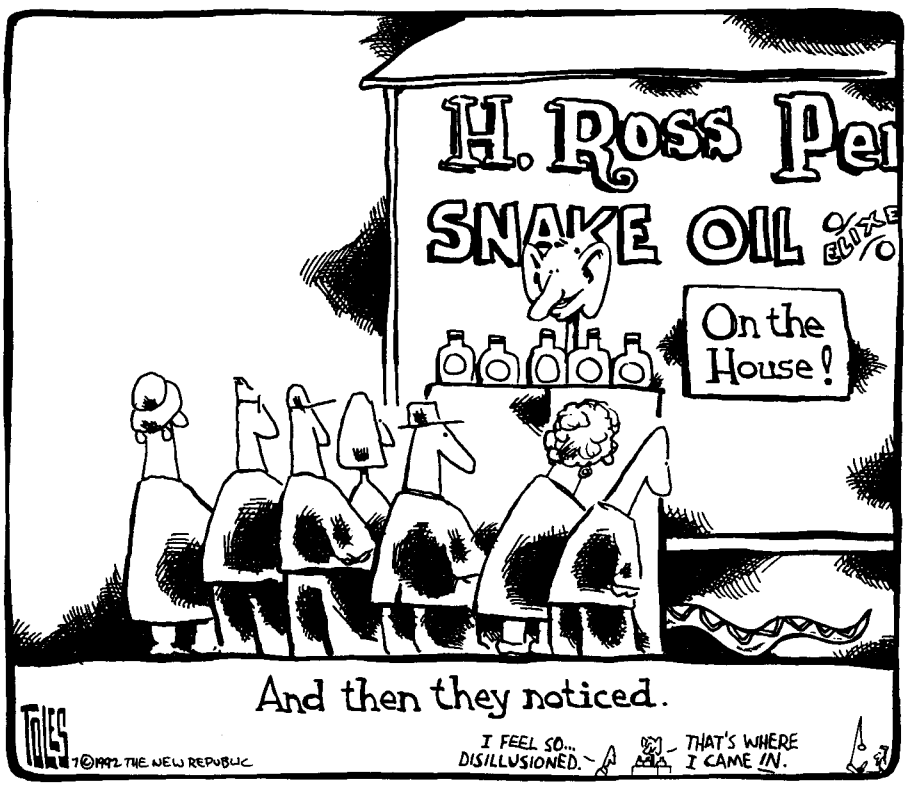
NOTEBOOK

BUSHISM OF THE WEEK: "And I know people are turned off from politics, but that doesn't mean that you withdraw and you pull away from it. If anybody should feel like withdrawing or pulling away from something, I could make a case for the Bush family. But I'm not going to do that, because I do believe in some of the stuff that I—you know, problems that I'm faced to solve, and I'm going to keep on saying what I believe. Yo." —at a picnic in Jackson, Wyoming, July 17



THE MIRACLE WORKER: The James Baker Ministry of Information was hard at work last week. First, there were the usual on-the-road puff pieces from the Middle East. *The New York Times*'s State Department spokesman, Thomas L. Friedman, duly obliged with a vignette, titled, "'Shalom Y'All' (But Baker Won't Say It)" with this tearjerker ending: "On the way out of the forest, Mr. Baker stopped for a moment on the hillside to gaze back at the saplings struggling in the rocky soil. It was the look of someone who thought he might not be returning soon." And then there was the steady drumbeat of stories about Baker's deigning to "rescue" the Bush campaign. There was no worry about how a candidacy that above all needs a message would be saved by a man who only knows management; and there were very few doubts about Baker's own record in foreign policy. But that is par for the course. Perhaps the only thing you can be sure of if Baker does return to the campaign is that Bush's press will miraculously improve.

UNSANCTIONED: The dumbest foreign policy plank in the Democratic platform is the one about South Africa. It calls for "maintenance of state and local sanctions against South Africa ... until there is an irreversible, full, and fair accommodation with the black majority to create a democratic government with full rights for all its citizens." This is like saying we still need the MX missile to defend against a Soviet attack. Democrats have every right to take credit for sanctions, which played a crucial part in bringing down apartheid, and which the Republicans vehemently opposed through the 1980s. They are no longer needed, though, to force whites to accept equal rights and democratic rule. That's what the platform of the National Party—the old party of apartheid—now calls for. Maintaining sanctions will do little more than prevent South Africa from becoming prosperous and democratic; they give the ANC a unilateral veto in negotiations, encourage it to pursue maximalist demands, and strengthen the hand of those in the organization who prefer one-party socialism to multiparty democracy.

MECHAM TOO: America's Olympic basketball team—the so-called "Dream Team"—travels to Barcelona this week with hopes of a gold medal. Yet as Americans watch the most awesome array of basketball talent ever assembled, they should remember that if Spain had the same immigration policy as the United States, Magic Johnson, who last year tested positive for HIV, would not be allowed in to attend the Games. They might also recall that this year's international AIDS conference in Amsterdam was also first scheduled for Boston, but was switched to protest the same policy. Thanks to George Bush, America is fast becoming the Arizona of international politics.

BROWN'S LAST FAN: "I thought all through the primaries, Brown had the message—that this is a party spoiled, that this is a two-party system that is corrupt ... I think Brown had the right message.... If I were Bill Clinton, I would put Jerry Brown there in prime time and I'd let him say to the country what he has been saying in the primary, that the country's democracy has fallen on bad ways." —Bill Moyers, on CNN, June 13 •

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THE SHRUB FILE

GLUG, GLUG

By Douglas G. McGrath

Monday, July 13, 1992—Jackson Hole, Wyoming

The Democrats are holding their convention, so the Shrub came here to fish at Crisco's ranch. As a man, I like the outdoors, but as a Secret Service agent, I see Nature as a disaster waiting to happen. Ever since that swimming bunny attacked Carter, all foliage must be frisked and any animal that approaches the Shrub must have clearance.

Agent Banks can be a bit hyper about all this. For instance, this morning Crisco and the Shrub were going for a trail ride. As the Shrub mounted his horse, the horse turned and bared his teeth at the Shrub's leg. Banks immediately put the horse in a neck lock, wrestled it to the ground, and swabbed its teeth. When the swab didn't change colors, he released the horse. He apologized to the Shrub but explained that he feared it was an M-512.

Crisco squinted at Banks. "What's an M-512?

"Assassination by biting," Banks explained.

I asked Banks who we were so afraid of, now that the USSR is pretty much out of the game. Saddam? Qaddafi?

"No," he said, "Republicans." He said we keep twenty-four-hour-a-day surveillance on Mrs. Loeb alone.

Tuesday, July 14

The Shrub posed for pictures fishing. As soon as the photographers left, he walked downriver. Banks led the way, wrestling a suspicious-looking eel out of the water and sending it to camp for prints and I.D.

At the bend of the river, Crisco was waiting. When we reached him, he pulled the branch of a scruff pine. A cluster of bushes parted and a hole in the ground opened up. I was stunned. We went underground to a large room filled with computers and TVs and a phone bank where Mr. Teeter was doing polls. The plan was to watch the convention and map out the Shrub's responses.

The first big theme we noticed the Dems hitting was "a woman's right to choose." The Shrub got very testy about this. "Really gets in the Bush knickers that these Molly Yarders say I'm anti-choice," he said. "Totally falsetto. In fact, I'm all for giving the gals choices. All they have to do is give birth to the little brown one, or the white one—*not in a color-specific mode on this one*—and they can have all the choices they want: they'll have to make a choice of names, choice of clothes, choice of a nice camp. Feel strongly about it—*matter of principle*—and that's what I'm going to tell people."

Crisco said, "That might be a bit complex. Probably better just to accuse Clinton of being for abortion quotas." The Shrub smiled and said, "OK! Whatever you say, Jimbo!"

Wednesday, July 15

Bunker surveillance indicated nothing until one of those Democrats had a line about how the Shrub let the Kurds be massacred. The Shrub got very mad about this. He said, "OK, now—that's not—there's a total—*upshot-wise*, what happened out there on that one out there was, by letting thousands of the Cottage Cheesies be killed, that did, I have to admit, those killings did result in some deaths. But—*in a good-side-of-the-coin mode now*—by allowing their massacre, I also—at the same time I also—and this is for the Cheesies that were somehow still alive—*I really eased that food shortage out there.* I mean, you know, hey, in that kind of a massive hunger deal, you can either up the amount you have to eat, or you can cut down on your eaters. I chose the latter and I think it was more than prudent. It was superprudent!"

Crisco said he thought that maybe a cleaner response on the war would be to stress how Clinton secretly ferried supplies to the Viet Cong. The Shrub said, "Whatever you say, Jimbo!" but was still kind of fired up because he said, "But one thing I'm *not* going to take any guff on is about how Kuwait still doesn't have democracy! It's true that a lot of Kuwaitis checked out citizenship-wise after it was clear that the emir was going back to a kind of gold-toilets-up-here-chop-people's-hands-off-down-there kind of a deal, but when those people fled, they fled to *the United States*, the *numero uno* democracy in the world. So, while I can't say I brought democracy to Kuwait, I *can* say I brought a lot of Kuwaitis to democracy."

Thursday, July 16

Convention winding down, so Shrub and Crisco are actually going to fish today. Banks is completely paranoid about letting the Shrub in the river. He said water management is tough. So we spent all night blocking off the river with dense underwater nets. This kept everything out of where they were going to fish, unfortunately including fish. Banks spent the morning underwater with an oxygen tank, tying fish onto the Shrub's line.

While Banks was underwater, I got a message on my walkie-t that Perot had announced his withdrawal from the race. I immediately told the Shrub, who was so excited he yanked his line and hooked something. It turned out to be Banks, but luckily the Shrub didn't have time to reel him in and find out. Crisco was equally thrilled about Perot. He said, "Now, if Clinton would just drop out, we might have a chance." He told the Shrub to make a statement right away.

So the Shrub phoned CNN. As he was waiting to go on the air, he dropped the phone in the river. The water apparently did some damage because people lost every other word he said. Fortunately, nobody noticed.

DOUGLAS G. MCGRATH is a playwright and screenwriter.

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WHITE HOUSE WATCH

HALF-BAKERED

By Fred Barnes

Certain things at the White House never change: left to his own devices, President Bush will say something goofy. At an ask-George-Bush session in Salt Lake City on July 18, he fused two of his cherished themes, family values and outdoor sports. Hunting and fishing strengthen family values, it turns out. "It's so hard to describe, but I feel it so strongly," Bush said. "... Anyone who has fished or hunted or hiked or camped with a child knows what I'm talking about." Three weeks earlier, at a Republican rally in Detroit, the president acted like a disappointed parent whose child—in this case, the American people—had let him down terribly. He's done so much, but is he properly appreciated? Au contraire, Bush said. He's eliminated the fear of nuclear war, yet "the country is totally focusing on something else." And he's got the economy growing again, but practically everyone thinks the recession is lingering. What ingrates!

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Secretary of State James Baker has his work cut out for him when he jumps to the White House. He not only has to take charge of the campaign against Democratic presidential nominee Bill Clinton. He's got to take charge of Bush. Disciplined, focused, task-oriented in the first thirty-three months of his presidency, Bush has lost control in the last nine. He reached the pinnacle of his power in October 1991 when he successfully fought for confirmation of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. Since then, as Senator Bill Bradley said at the Democratic convention, Bush has "waffled, wiggled, and wavered." The week after the Thomas triumph, he made a bad compromise on a civil rights bill. Then he bowed to a flutter of criticism and canceled a trip to Japan. Worse, he rescheduled the trip and acted like a supplicant in Japan. He returned to deliver a forgettable State of the Union address. In the New Hampshire primary he announced, "Message: I care." He promised to fight to the death for an economic growth agenda, but didn't. The Los Angeles riot inspired emotion but no leadership from Bush. Ross Perot claimed repeatedly that the president had waged the Persian Gulf war only to prove his manhood. Bush was silent.

Baker's main job, whether he's a presidential counselor or economic czar or campaign chief, is to protect Bush from his vices. One is vindictiveness. Bush probably could have prevented the embarrassment of having a major Republican, Ed Rollins, join Perot's abortive campaign. Last spring Governor Pete Wilson of California asked Rollins to run the Bush campaign in the state. Rollins was willing. Then Wilson talked to Bush and had to call off the arrangement. "The president hates your guts," Wilson told Rollins, who had, like many Republicans, criticized Bush's budget deal with Congress in 1990. A few weeks later Representative Vin Weber of Minnesota pleaded with Bush to phone Rollins and ask him not to sign up with Perot. One call would do the trick, Weber said. But Bush wouldn't do it. Now, when Bush needs as many allies as he can get, his subordinates are treating Rollins like a pariah (while hypocritically praising Perot). They're just following the boss's lead.

Another Bush vice is the insistence on giving speeches with a diffuse message. The natural conclusion is that Bush has no domestic agenda and no interest in having one. In fact, when all Bush's proposals of the last year are tied together, they constitute a broad

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agenda for dramatic change: legal reform, school choice, term limits on members of Congress, a balanced budget amendment, welfare reform, a school prayer amendment, tenant ownership of public housing, etc. But who's to know? Bush has never packaged all of them effectively under a single theme, and no one at the White House has the personal standing with Bush to tell him his speeches stink. That job now falls to Baker.

Pre-Baker, Bush's best effort was a speech at Brigham Young University on July 18. But Bush was only reacting to Clinton's emphasis on change in his acceptance speech at the Democratic convention. "I want to change things," Bush said. On his watch, "America has led the world to change." He added, "It is time to say so long to politics as usual. And more than that, it's high time to shake up the system. And if you'll excuse just one more political observation: you give me a Congress that shares my values and your values, and you'd see this system not just shaken, but rattled and even rolled." The trouble was, this sounded more like Perot than Bush. Bush needs to speak in his own voice, assuming he has one.

Still another Bush vice is a high tolerance of loose management. Baker, a control freak, is bound to change this. But until he arrives, no one is in charge. Sam Skinner is a hands-off White House chief of staff. Budget director Richard Darman dominates discussions of domestic policy, economics, and legislative strategy. Vice President Dan Quayle and his staff have minimal White House guidance. The Bush-Quayle campaign staff lacks firm direction. More often than not, it puts forward its most defensive and unconvincing spokesmen, strategist Charles Black and deputy campaign chairman Fred Malek, for television appearances. Roger Ailes, Bush's media consultant in 1988, says at the rate it's going, the Bush campaign won't get into high gear until December. That's a joke, he says, but I wonder.

You'd expect the campaign to have its ducks in a row for the Republican convention beginning August 17. Not so. When a staffer called Housing Secretary

What If He Quit?

What if George Bush staged an August Surprise? What if James Baker's move to the campaign team is but a ruse for Bush's withdrawal from the race entirely, in favor of the real Texan?

Preposterous, you say. But there are reasons Bush might prefer to return to Kennebunkport, or the hotel room in Houston, or wherever it is that he lives. One is his health, which may not be as robust as he would have us believe and which appears somewhat shaky even in the official reports. Another is that he will almost certainly be defeated. Even with Baker or without Dan Quayle, there's no way he can bring us out of recession in the next few months or overcome the widespread revulsion against him and his policies. Anything he does now to change course will only remind voters how inadequate his presidency has been so far. A third is that the party leaders, rather than go down with the ship, might persuade him to step aside in favor of a stronger candidate.

Of the three reasons, the last may be the most unlikely. Only in parliamentary democracies can parties put the boot in so dramatically, as Margaret Thatcher can testify. Here the decision is Bush's alone. But what does he have to gain from running again? If he should—miraculously—be re-elected, he will replace Herbert Hoover on the political dart board, the architect of depression and decline. If he quits now he'll be remembered as the hero of the Gulf war. This is particularly true if under the Democrats the economy deteriorates even further, which is quite possible and even likely.

Of course, he might well decide to hang on until the end, however slim his chances. Heads of state almost never seem to know how to quit while they still have a chance of massaging their posthumous reputation. British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was one of the few who invented a pseudo-illness to get out while he could. But most of the others who have had a rescuable first term invariably push their luck and try for a second—and regret it. Just in our recent history, Truman, Eisenhower, and Nixon all watched the successes of their first terms turn into ashes in the second.

Bush's chances for re-election are slim, and his defeat will bring other Republican candidates down with him. Even Republicans have no loyalty toward him. Perot's candidacy was a stunning indictment of Bush's credibility, as is Clinton's inflated bubble of popularity. In a recent poll, a full two-thirds of all those interviewed said they disapproved of Bush's handling of his job—a stinging rejection of an incumbent president.

Who would take Bush's place if he withdrew? The answer is obvious. James Baker would win the nomination by unanimous accord. It goes without saying that he would drop Quayle, whose occupancy of the vice presidency is a continuing embarrassment to a party that has serious pretensions to govern a great country. Baker would have a considerable pool of talent to tap, including the widely admired General Colin Powell—a potent drawing card even among those ethnic minorities that do not normally vote Republican.

Freed from the albatross of the Bush persona and domestic record, Baker could run a real campaign. From a Republican perspective a Baker-Powell combination would be a dream ticket. For the Democrats it would be a ticket from hell. For the American people it would be a chance to choose between two teams untainted by domestic failure and with leadership capacities offering at least some hope of bringing the country out of its current distress and anger.

Will the Republicans do it? Only if they rouse themselves from slavish obedience and shed their death wish. Will Bush do it himself? Tradition dictates he won't. But in this race anything can happen—including the possibility that George Bush, at the assemblage of the party faithful in Houston, may announce that health problems prevent him from carrying on his important work for another four years, and that he is turning over the bridge to his good and faithful friend. The Democrats had better hope he hangs on.

RONALD STEEL

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Jack Kemp to find out how many rooms he'd need in Houston, Kemp's aide, Sharon Zelaska, said none. Kemp isn't going. Instantly, calls poured into Kemp's office from campaign honchos. He'd planned to go on vacation with his family, Kemp said, but of course he'd go to the convention if the president had something important for him to do. By that, he meant a prime-time speech (keynote or nominating). Kemp's hardball tactic may have worked. "He's going to have a significant role at the convention," insists Robert Teeter, the Bush campaign manager. "He's one of our real stars."

Here's the hardest part for Baker: making Bush a more appealing president, not just a better candidate. Bush's strategists "realize they've got to do something rather than just say something," says Weber, who has agreed to be a co-chairman of the Bush campaign. In other words, Bush must act aggressively on the economy, fashion fresh proposals on issues like education and health care, and spell out detailed plans for a second term. The most tangible step would be to make Baker the administration's permanent economic czar, not just a temporary White House counselor who would return to the State Department if Bush is re-elected. Bush could say that he'd brought in his top aide, fresh from making gains toward peace in the Middle East, because the job of jacking up the economy couldn't wait any longer. What Baker doesn't get done this year, Bush could say, he'll go for in Bush's second term. This way, Bush could argue that he's acting chiefly out of concern for the economy and the American people, not for his own re-election. He wouldn't be telling the whole truth, for Baker would be straw boss of the campaign too. But at least nobody would say Bush is being goofy again. •

Italy's bribery scandal.

BADFELLAS

By Alexander Stille

MILAN

For more than forty years, corruption scandals have come and gone in Italy, leaving little more than a residual stench. But the massive bribery scandal unfolding in Milan is different: already it has shaken Italy's ruling class and threatens to overturn the party-dominated system that has run the country since World War II.

The investigation started on February 17, when Mario Chiesa, a socialist politician and head of Milan's largest public charity, was caught pocketing a $6,000 bribe—apparently an average day at the office for a man with $10 million in secret Swiss bank accounts. Since then judges in Milan have moved steadily up the pyramid, arresting or indicting city councilmen, local party treasurers, two former mayors, and nine members of Parliament. The investigation, known as "Operation Clean Hands," has shown bribe collection to be one of the most efficient and organized arms of the Italian government. Officials have routinely skimmed from 2 percent to 14 percent off government contracts for every public service, from airports and hospitals to theaters and orphanages.

Virtually all the major parties are implicated. Many of the bribes were parceled out through the same division of spoils that applies to everything from public jobs to TV air time. The Socialists and Christian Democrats took the lion's share, but the Communist Party (now the Democratic Party of the Left) often participated, and a few juicy scraps were left for two or three smaller parties.

The scandal has spread rapidly to dozens of other cities. The investigation in Venice may turn out to be as big as that in Milan: last week prosecutors there indicted the two "doges," former Foreign Minister Gianni De Michaelis (Socialist) and former Transportation Minister Carlo Bernini (Christian Democrat), accused of dividing up payoffs on all major public contracts in the region. "Operation Clean Hands has hit Italian politics like a cyclone," write Giuseppe Turani and Cinzia Sasso in *I Sacheggiatori* (The Looters), a new book on the scandal. "After this, nothing will ever be the same."

It is no accident that the scandal is coming to light now. During the cold war many Italian voters considered corruption a lesser evil than a government headed by the Italian Communist Party. "Hold your nose and vote Christian Democrat," was the attitude of Indro Montanelli, editor of the conservative newspaper *Il Giornale* during the mid-1970s, when the Communists were on the verge of overtaking the Christian Democrats. The collapse of communism has opened a Pandora's box of pent-up frustration and disgust with the Italian system.

The public response to the scandal is euphoric. The prosecutor who started the investigation, Antonio Di Pietro, has become a national hero—his picture regularly appears on the cover of newsmagazines. Graffiti writers scrawl "Grazie Di Pietro!" (Thanks, Di Pietro!) across walls in Milan. Di Pietro T-shirts are popular among Italian teenagers, and there are candlelight vigils to show support for the investigation.

More important, the traditional wall of silence has shattered. In Milan more than 100 businessmen have asked to be interrogated by judges. Corruption "hotlines" are ringing off the hook with people eager to report cases of bribery and extortion. The atmosphere is a little like Eastern Europe after the collapse of communism. Suddenly Italians are rebelling against a system they had regarded as eternal and inevitable.

Italian entrepreneurs realize that the old patronage

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system is incompatible with the new climate of increased European and global competition. The system of collusion between government and business worked well enough in a relatively closed, protected market, but now it represents an onerous tax. Moreover, greed seems to have accelerated during the boom of the 1980s, as the parties demanded ever larger bribes. Estimates of the cost of corruption are in the tens of billions of dollars per year, which helps explain why Italy's debt ($140 billion) is larger than its gross national product.

It is significant that the scandal broke in Milan, the center of growing anti-party protest and of the Lombard League, which—along with asserting the regional autonomy of Northern Italy—has made the fight against party dominance a crusade. As one confessed bribe-taker said in a recent interview: "The investigation became unstoppable because of the great ability of the judges ... but also because of the rise of the League and the general distrust of people in the parties. 'Throw them in jail,' is the cry of the crowd. And this undoubtedly helped the judges ... I don't know whether they could have succeeded in something like this four years ago."

The ancien régime is not going without a fight. Some have called for a "general amnesty" before the majority of Italy's politicians ends up behind bars. After initially dismissing all accusations of corruption in his party, former prime minister and socialist leader Bettino Craxi recently said that bribery is so widespread it can't be prosecuted. "Everybody knows that much of the financing of the parties and of the political system is irregular or illegal," he said before Parliament. "And if this material is considered criminal, then most of our system would be a criminal system."

Like American party bosses of the Tammany Hall era, many politicians involved are eager to differentiate between "honest graft" and the dishonest kind. Andrea Parini, who was arrested for collecting a $250,000 bribe for the Socialist Party, said in a recent interview: "There's an important distinction: if Cavour had asked the Countess of Castiglione to go to bed with the Emperor of France for money, he would have been just a pimp. But since he did it for the unity of Italy, he was a great statesman."

In the heady post-scandal climate, even some of the worst offenders are eagerly granting interviews. These party bagmen knew they were collecting not political contributions but payoffs for specific favors that enriched some and damaged others and increased their own power and influence. Luigi Martinelli, a devout Catholic (and Christian Democrat), says he was torn between "the vocation toward honesty but also the desire to get ahead." His solution was to take bribes and then confess them to his priest. Still, those who have been in jail have lost little of their arrogance. Roberto Mongini, another prominent Christian Democrat, joked about bribes in the magazine *Panorama*: "Actually, we didn't take that much in bribes, not because we were more honest than the others, only because the prosecutors arrived too early.... I told the judges, if you had only waited a little while, you would have found a real bundle." At another point, when he asked whether he regrets his actions, Mongini says, "Are you kidding?... If the judges hadn't intervened, who would have stopped us?" It was, he says, "a perfect, bullet-proof, oligarchic system, businessmen and politicians all together."

The politicians were so sure they were untouchable that they continued taking bribes even while Di Pietro's investigation was in full swing. "Several times I said to my Christian Democrat friends: Watch out guys, this can't last, one day the tax inspector will come and the heavens will open," Martinelli says. "But they considered me provincial: 'No tax inspector will ever set foot in the headquarters of the [Christian Democrats].' Even when Di Pietro started his case they didn't realize that the music might change."

Although Craxi's legal responsibility may prove nil, his moral responsibility is enormous. Craxi represents Milan in Parliament, and his party has governed the city for forty years. His brother-in-law, Paolo Pillitteri—accused of personally accepting suitcases full of cash—was mayor of the city when the scandal broke. His son, Vittorio, known as "Bobo," though only 28, was head of the party in Milan. Bobo's recent election to local office was paid for in large part by Mario Chiesa, whose arrest started the case. Chiesa insists that the younger Craxi did not know the money came from bribes. Maybe so, but after the Milan scandal, no one in Italy believes that it's Santa Claus leaving the envelopes full of lira under the tree at election time.

ALEXANDER STILLE is the author of *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian-Jewish Families Under Fascism* (Summit Books).

LOS ANGELES POSTCARD

GUN CLUB

By Ellen Ladowsky

Schubert's Mass in E-flat plays quietly in the background of Sean Collinsworth's Santa Monica beach apartment. "Schubert was a very troubled soul," Collinsworth tells me, while strapping on his gun. The gun is, in fact, why I'm here. Collinsworth is the only person listed under "Gun Instruction/Defensive Shooting" in the Los Angeles Yellow Pages. Everyone agrees that guns have been proliferating in Southern California. ("They announced the Rodney King

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verdict at 4:30," one gun retailer told me, "and by 5:30 we had lines in our stores.") What awaits the anxious yuppies who flirt with this consumer trend? I'm hoping Collinsworth will show me. But already I'm terrified by the sight of a firearm.

Collinsworth is a deputy in the L.A. sheriff's department. He runs "Deadly Force," his handgun instruction business, on the side. At 36 he is tanned and fit. He frosts the tips of his hair. For our interview he is wearing bicycle shorts and a T-shirt. Mainly, he says, his clients are doctors, lawyers, dentists, and other professionals. Before the riots most were women. Now most are men, a shift he attributes to the videotaped beating of truck driver Reginald Denny. "All of my clients are humanitarians," Collinsworth adds. "They don't want to use their guns." Indeed, when they first call him, many, like me, are reluctant to make a commitment to gun training. That's before Collinsworth turns on the charm.

"How would you feel to have four total strangers hold you down and rape you?" he asks me. "I've seen this several times, where they take someone, a woman, to a vacant house, and for the next several hours, you're at the pleasure of every gang member in that neighborhood." He mentions a UCLA med student who was recently grazed by gunfire, and a young woman who narrowly escaped death only after offering her assailant oral sex. "I don't want to sound real Marxist and say that it's class warfare, but I think ... Reaganomics and just politics in the last decade has led to a real have-have not atmosphere." There is also an earthquake scenario: "No emergency services for five days to a week ... massive looting."

Collinsworth tells me that I am the "perfect victim." "When you got out of the car today, did you see the two people walk by you? I guarantee you that one of them was an ex-con, and they were both very big. They were watching you get out of the car. Unconsciously, I was setting up a targeting sequence on how I was going to draw down and shoot him if it came to that." Seated at a restaurant, Collinsworth begins to grill me: "Without looking, the person to your right: What does he look like?" (I haven't noticed anyone.) "Blond hair, black leather jacket. What has he had to eat? Nothing. He's been sipping on the same Coke since we've been here.... You have to be aware that you're in a dangerous situation." His warnings become sterner. "Your education, your upbringing, your stature in society mean nothing. You will be raped, you will be sodomized, you will be robbed, you can be murdered, all at the whim of this terrorist, this vicious *predator*, and you must be the survivor."

I set up an appointment for the next available lesson. The first part of the course, at Collinsworth's apartment, covers the basics of guns and gun safety. I learn how a gun works. I learn the difference between a revolver and a semiautomatic. Collinsworth sets me up with a .38 revolver, a popular choice. Semiautos are quicker, but he assures me the revolver is as deadly. Accuracy is what matters. I'm still terrified. As we load and unload the gun, Collinsworth talks about the benefits of "awareness," in comforting tones. "When you become aware, you become more relaxed; because you can come closer to your environment, you see so much more.... My natural observation is far more accurate than anyone else. I see more beauty." He packs up an arsenal of weapons and we head for the range.

The Beverly Hills Gun Club (which is not in Beverly Hills) offers a curious mix of urban vigilantism and California environmental sensitivity. Posters of Eastwood and Stallone adorn the walls. Flyers advertise various self-defense courses. ("State Certified Tear Gas Instructor Rudy Pichardo presents 'Citizen Mace.'") But everyone who wants to shoot must sign a waiver warning that the noise could damage their hearing and that the particles generated from bullets hitting the backdrop could expose them to lead poisoning.

I put on earplugs and goggles. There are people blasting guns just feet away on either side of me. I'm nervous. I grasp the revolver I've been given. I'd never even held a gun until my first interview with Collinsworth—and I had been too scared to pull the trigger even when the gun was not loaded. Now the gun *is* loaded. Meanwhile, the ear-fracturing sound of live fire continues all around me. I flinch every time I hear it. Conversation is virtually impossible.

I assume the stance Collinsworth has shown me—legs apart, arms extended, breathing normal. Between rounds of other people's fire I can hear him shouting at me: "Calm down." I squeeze the trigger. The kick of the gun jerks my entire body, and the flash from the muzzle seems to jump toward my face. But the sensation that strikes me instantly is not the sound, but the smell. The smell of burnt gunpowder. I discover a curious thing: I love it.

After a few more shots, I grow more confident. Soon I'm caught up in the exhilaration of squeezing the trigger and waiting for the hammer to drop and then the explosion. I begin to get my timing and "cadence" down so that I can actually focus on the body target ahead of me. I get off two shots in four seconds. Both bullets strike in the "vital organ" area on the target. "You've just caused some massive tissue damage," says Collinsworth.

I leave the range with a slight swagger, perhaps even enhanced "self-esteem." Is this a new form of therapy? Collinsworth tells me he'd like to wean himself from law enforcement work. He says he's already broken into Hollywood as a technical adviser, including work on a TV series called "True Blue" that's been picked up by ABC. He has also appeared on seven episodes of the Fox television show "COPS." And his personal handgun-training sessions, for which he charges $75 to $100 an hour, are booked solid. "This summer is going to be very long," he tells me. "I believe that racial tensions are not going to be solved, are not going to end overnight." Business looks good.

ELLEN LADOWSKY is an associate radio producer at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

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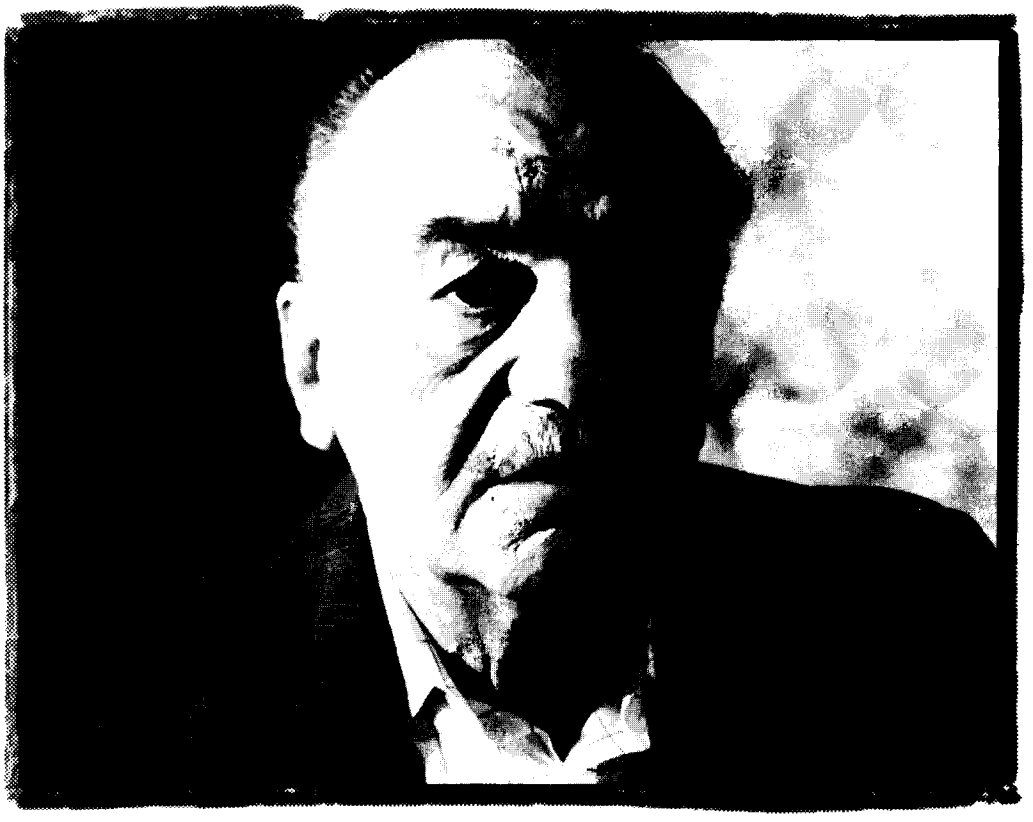

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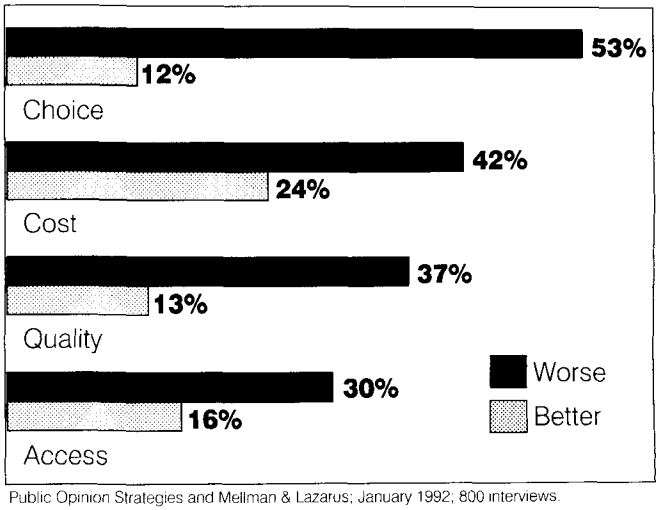

Public Opinion Strategies and Mellman & Lazarus; January 1992; 800 interviews.

Margin of Error: ± 3.1%; Respondents who answered 'Don't Know' or 'Neutral' not shown in graphs.

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The rise of the Democrats.

PARTY TIME

By Sidney Blumenthal

Under the blue-and-white awning of the Yale Club's rooftop garden, several of Bill Clinton's policy advisers committed an act intended to rattle the spirit of Bonesman George Bush: a feting of the Cajun campaign strategist James Carville. Only an hour before Ross Perot had withdrawn from the race he never entered. And the Democratic nominee was to deliver his acceptance speech that evening. Comforted by the belief that the theme of "change" was now Clinton's property alone, the Clinton team relaxed. Carville, after downing glass after glass of iced tea, managed this magnanimous observation for a key member of the Perot team: "If Hamilton Jordan's heart was on fire, I wouldn't piss down his throat to put it out."

Several explanations have been floated to explain Carville's confidence and Clinton's boom: the convention "bump"; Clinton's own personal victory; and the triumph of the right within the Democratic Party over the left. None has been overwhelmingly compelling. The figures were far larger than any previous popularity bump, and Clinton's performance was hardly a triumph. Like a Victorian novel written hastily at length in monthly installments, it was drenched in sentimental bathos; everything that could be said twice was said thrice. And the simple right-beats-left story didn't work either. Obviously Clinton has assimilated much that appears to be an accommodation to the conservative era: the family values symbolism; a mild redistributionism; the emphasis on law and order, entrepreneurialism, workfare. None of this is accidental. But there were other, equally potent symbols: Clinton's only public appearance before his speech was at a rally for Democratic women candidates, where he proclaimed the need for "a new gender of leadership"; his commitment to gay rights and his insistence on the litmus test of choice on abortion do not easily conform to a conservative identity. The party, however, was prepared to play along with the game. "This is a pleasant misunderstanding that the commentators are providing the public," says a high DNC official.

What accounted for the success of Clinton's convention was simply its resuscitation of the party of practical government for the majority of voters. Despite its poor organization, Clinton's speech hit on this central, overarching theme most effectively in the form of a Lincoln anecdote: "I know how President Lincoln felt when General McClellan wouldn't attack in the Civil War. He asked him, 'If you're not going to use your army, may I borrow it?' And so I say, George Bush, if you won't use your power to help America, step aside. I will."

Above everything else, Clinton stands for a return to government as an agent for helping the middle class. His arguments cannot be easily misinterpreted as a call for the middle class to subsidize the poor. Rather he insists that the members of the underclass be transformed over time into middle-class citizens. His shift in rhetoric from that of the congressional Democrats who were forced into a corner to defend social welfare programs over the past twelve years reveals political lessons learned. All this—and much more—distances Clinton from the defamatory image of the "liberal." But in his fundamental belief in the efficacy of government—not as a substitute for all other institutions, but in its ability to make all sorts of social and economic changes—Clinton is in the main tradition of his party.

Perhaps more than anyone else, Ross Perot sensed the underlying change. In offering his mostly dissembling explanation for refusing to run, he declared that the Democratic Party had been "revitalized," something he had not anticipated. There were many causes of Perot's withdrawal, most lodged in the crevices of his psyche. But the one unmistakably political motive that Perot himself offered was that the party had triumphed over the movement. Perot didn't endorse: he conceded.

Clinton's smooth convention, in many respects, was the last station of the tortuous path from the 1968 convention in Chicago: party cohesion began with street fighting. But the New Deal party itself was not rock solid; it was built on a fault line. The unifying link among its partners was a growing federal government. "Tax and tax, spend and spend, elect and elect," remarked Harry Hopkins, FDR's alter ego. The coalition of opposites—the urban working class and the Southern Bourbons, for example—remained a marriage of convenience based on mutual patronage. After World War II, the New Deal party was held together by the cold war policy, which provided the military Keynesianism to continue federal largess. But by the 1960s pressing demands for domestic reform and civil rights required an assault on the Southern Bourbon citadel: the committee chairmen in the congressional party. Under Lyndon Johnson, a Southern liberal president, it seemed that the task might be accomplished and the party set on a new basis. But the combination of Johnson's greatest achievement (breaking Southern congressional power and enfranchising blacks) and his greatest failure (the Vietnam War) blew the coalition to smithereens.

Since the day that LBJ announced he would not run for re-election, the paramount question for the Democrats was their revival, not as a mere coalition but as a majoritarian, programmatic party. The New Deal party as such could never be reconstituted. But the

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notion that the party could retrieve its centrality in politics seemed an anachronism. The foreign policy consensus had been shattered by the Vietnam War. Movements appeared to have more potency than the party, which was a shell to be captured.

Precisely because of its breakup over civil rights, the party rebirth was always ideally led by a Southerner. But Jimmy Carter, the only Democratic president since 1968, had the sensibility of an anti-politics engineer, with no concept of how to use the party or real interest in doing so. In 1980, on the exact spot in Madison Square Garden where Clinton stood twelve years later, Carter was snubbed before the whole party by his chief rival, Ted Kennedy, who represented the remnants of the New Deal coalition—left, right, center—in revolt against Carter's political incompetence. In 1984 Mondale presented a pure coalitional politics, which was nearly toppled by Gary Hart, a generational forerunner of Clinton in his understanding that postindustrial society demands new pragmatic solutions rather than reiterations. But Hart, who cultivated his alienation, lacked a political touch. He left the field to be occupied by Michael Dukakis, who tried to use the "Massachusetts Miracle" as a postindustrial model; but its political dimensions were beyond the grasp of his narrow, linear mind. His view of the party remained stunted; it was that of a horrified mugwump.

Every campaign since 1968 has sought to establish a revised party. In 1992 the rules worked finally to winnow the field, suppress any minority candidate who might hold up the party for ransom and produce a consensus program. But for this scenario to be fulfilled, the central role had to be played by a nominee who had respect for the political arts. This was not the triumph of a rump group, but of the party itself. If Clinton had been a regional, factional, or narrowly ideological candidate, he would have been easily isolated and taken apart. Instead, he was anointed as the *party* candidate, the organizational candidate. He decidedly was not the Al Gore of 1988. At the first meeting of his exploratory campaign meeting in 1991, Clinton explicitly rejected the elements of the past Gore strategy, which were based on a notion of a party riven by the cold war.

The losers in the "revitalized" party were Jerry Brown's followers—anti-political remnants who believed that the party had to be destroyed. They resembled postgraduates who hung around campus communities years after the '60s were over. In the California delegation on opening night, some started unprovoked fist fights with other delegates. They had the intensity of Spartacists, but without any ideology, or even program. This was populist insurgency as arrested development. The Brownies had no sense of their own insularity or national irrelevance. They were stragglers from People's Park rising to barricades in defense of their leader's cynicism. Even Jesse Jackson had the sense to separate himself from this. In the CNN anchor booth, while Brown drilled his rhetoric into the microphone, Jackson turned his head to the reporters to roll his eyes.

Clinton's reshaping of the party is performed with almost painful self-consciousness. Just as the New Deal was appropriate as the reform of industrial society, Clinton believes he is developing reforms appropriate for postindustrial society. And Clinton's frames of reference encompass more than Democratic Party history. After the British Labour Party went down to defeat this year, he observed that the Democrats could learn more from "Bad Godesberg," where the German Social Democrats thirty-five years ago laid out a detailed program for the "social market," than "Brighton," where the Labourites adjusted only symbolically. But the Democratic Party, the oldest party in the world, was never a class-based party like Labour. Perhaps Clinton's most used phrase is "other advanced countries," by which he means Western European countries where social market policies, such as health insurance and apprenticeship training, are in effect.

The means to this end is the political party; and what the last two weeks have proved more than anything else is the resilience of the party as a successful political institution. Yet this was supposed to have been the year when party politics collapsed. William Greider, in his populist manifesto *Who Will Tell the People?* (amplified by Bill Moyers in a series on PBS), made the case: "The Democratic Party no longer performs the basic functions of a political party. It acts neither as a faithful mediator between citizens and the government nor as a forum for policy debate and resolution nor even as a structure around which political power can accumulate." From Tsongas to Brown to Perot, this was the message; and it failed. The party, as opposed to the movement (left, right or radical center), has been reasserted as the organizing political principle. Brown and Perot, as it has turned out, were the vacuums that collapsed, not the Democratic Party. But the possibility of its final revival still depends on Clinton's winning and reanimating the executive. •

The latest HIV fib.

TEENAIDS

By Michael Fumento

"AIDS Runs Wild Among Teenagers," read a recent headline in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. *U.S. News & World Report* warned in its May 4 issue that "the AIDS epidemic has taken an ominous turn toward America's youth," and that "AIDS and HIV infection are rising fastest among

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teens and college-age kids." CNN has noted a "drastic rise" in the number of "teenagers infected with AIDS," and *The New York Times* has reported, "As schools and public health officials increasingly realize, teenagers are a high-risk group." At a March press conference, Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan, accompanied by top officials from the Public Health Service and the Centers for Disease Control, announced a $1.5 million ad campaign targeting the area where "the epidemic is spreading most rapidly today ... among heterosexuals, among teens and young adults, and in areas outside the big cities." PBS's much-applauded "In the Shadow of Love: A Teen AIDS Story" featured teens dropping dead of the disease.

Such cries of teenage AIDS doom are politically useful, underscoring demands that sex education and condom use be taught in schools, or that chastity be "taught." They can also be lucrative. "In the Shadow of Love," which told its audience that "a single condom can save hundreds of lives," was underwritten in part by condom manufacturer Carter-Wallace. But claims that AIDS will soon be as common among teens as acne are simply false.

Here are the actual figures from the CDC. In 1990 there were 170 teen AIDS cases reported in this country. Last year this number dropped to 160. For those of "college age," 20-24 years, the numbers dropped from 1,626 in 1990 to 1,485 in 1991. By comparison, some 5,000 15- to 24-year-olds commit suicide and 12,000 die in auto accidents per year. (About half of those deaths would have been prevented if the victims had been convinced to wear their seat belts, rather than condoms.) Teenagers constitute far less than 1 percent of all AIDS cases, and 20- to 24-year-olds make up a mere 4 percent of the total. Both categories are actually declining as a percent of the overall total. Despite the slogan, AIDS does discriminate. Youthful victims are overwhelmingly male and disproportionately black and Hispanic. Male cases among 13- to 24-year-olds outnumber female cases nine-to-one.

The public fascination is with heterosexual teens. Yet the plurality of teen AIDS cases come not from sex but from those who received hemophilia clotting factor. The second-largest category is homosexual males, whose risk factor is anal intercourse. Last year a mere twenty-one AIDS cases were reported in which teenagers claimed heterosexual contact as their risk factor, down from thirty-seven the previous year. It may soon be true that more heterosexual teens contract AIDS on television than in the bedroom. As of the end of 1991, not a single white male teenager diagnosed with AIDS had claimed heterosexual contact as his risk behavior.

On what basis does the media claim a huge increase in AIDS cases among the young? Many of the recent articles and newscasts were based on a report released in April by the House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, chaired by Representative Pat Schroeder of Colorado, titled: "A Decade of Denial: Teens and AIDS in America." The report called the federal response to teen AIDS a "national disgrace," and claimed that the virus is "spreading unchecked" among teens and that every day it "gains ground and threatens the loss of another generation."

The report stated that, to quote a *Los Angeles Times* headline, "AIDS in 13-24 Age Range Grows 62% in Two Years." The problem with this figure is that it presents data in cumulative terms, comparing the last two years of the AIDS epidemic with the earliest years, in which there were only a handful of cases. Statistics are not presented this way for any other disease. Cumulative cases tell us nothing about trends or about what a given disease is doing now. Thus, even if there were not a single new AIDS case in the 13-24 category in 1992, the *L.A. Times* could inform us: "AIDS in 13-24 Age Range Grows 62% in Three Years." An epidemic that had magically disappeared could still be made to sound terrifying. That, indeed, is the idea. Had the Schroeder report made any reference to 1990 figures, it would have defeated its purpose.

Though the year-by-year AIDS data are readily available from the CDC, a computer search revealed that not a single newspaper, magazine, or broadcast informed its audience that teen and college-age cases were actually declining. It is true that the figures are for AIDS cases, not HIV infection, which does not manifest itself as full-blown AIDS for an average of eight to ten years. The Schroeder report cited two studies in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* that it claimed made matters even worse based on HIV statistics. In fact, the articles contained no such data.

One of the studies, dealing with military applicants, showed an infection rate that if extrapolated to all the nation's teenagers would indicate a rate of one in 3,000. By contrast, the government is constantly telling us that in the nation as a whole the number is one in 250. Further, since testing began the trend has been downward. The percentage of those testing positive in the last recorded year, April 1988 to March '89, was half that of the first year. Neither of these pertinent facts was included in the 500-page House report or in any of the media coverage.

The other study cited in the House report examined Job Corps applicants. The article repeatedly stated that far from being representative of the teen population, Job Corps applicants were disproportionately disadvantaged members of minority groups who "are at a particularly high risk for HIV infection." The article also stated that while "HIV seroprevalence begins to increase markedly in the 16- to 21-year-old range, the group included in the Job Corps," (prior to this age, sex and needle-sharing are extremely rare) "the rates found in these age groups are still only a fraction of those in persons aged 25 to 44 years." This is the opposite of what the Schroeder committee said the Job Corps study established.

The alleged teenage AIDS epidemic is indicative of a

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larger pattern. The number of reported AIDS cases this year is running 4.5 percent ahead of last year. Reported cases last year were a mere 5 percent higher than the year before. These encouraging figures have not been reported. Indeed, Dr. James Mason of PHS said on the "Today" show in January that the epidemic was not leveling off, but rather that there had been a 32 percent increase in 1991. Evidence of a flattening epidemic has prompted activists to lobby the CDC—successfully—to propose a vast expansion of the AIDS definition that would obfuscate the development. Only cries of outrage from the scientific community—and ironically, from some of the activists, who stopped pushing for the new definition when they realized that they would be included in the government AIDS registry before becoming seriously ill—have so far prevented the new definition from going into effect.

What the government, the media, and activist groups are spreading is what Gregg Easterbrook has, in another context, labeled "benevolent Big Lies." Indeed, Easterbrook himself was benevolently lied to by Surgeon General Antonia Novella, in a January *Los Angeles Times* interview, when she told him, "Don't, don't believe that AIDS has leveled off." In praising the Schroeder report, Novella stated, "The cases of the future are going to be teenagers and young adults and infants and young children." In fact, all four of these categories declined from 1990 to 1991 both in sheer numbers and as a percentage of all cases. The Big Liars have decided that the public has no right to know what the AIDS epidemic is really doing.

It should go without saying—though in the politically charged atmosphere that surrounds AIDS it cannot—that to note that AIDS remains a disease limited primarily to specific groups engaging in specific practices is not to say that these people deserve to bear the brunt of a terrible epidemic. It implies no value judgment at all. The first step in controlling a communicable disease is to determine who is getting it and how. The disinformation campaign that grossly overemphasizes the groups and activities least at risk of getting AIDS does those in greater jeopardy no favor.

MICHAEL FUMENTO is the author of *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS* (New Republic/Basic Books).

The Middle East's New Order—and Israel.

THE PROTECTORATE

By Robert W. Tucker

Historians of U.S. Middle East policy will record that in the spring of 1992, two years after the end of the cold war and one year after the end of the Gulf war, the American government was intent on removing from power the governments of Iraq, Libya, and Israel. Against the government of Saddam Hussein, whose continued refusal to fulfill the terms of Iraq's surrender was a standing reproach to those who had failed to ensure his downfall, the Bush administration persisted in the general embargo begun in August 1990. It did so despite the declining prospects that Saddam would soon fall from power and despite the embargo's harsh effects on the Iraqi people. Against the government of Muammar Qaddafi, who persistently refused to hand over for trial two suspects in the 1988 Pan Am bombing over Scotland, the Bush administration led the way in a United Nations embargo on air traffic between Libya and the rest of the world. Additional sanctions included the reduction of Libya's foreign missions, a total arms embargo, and a demand that the Libyan government demonstrate by acts its renunciation of terrorism. Although Washington remained silent about its larger objectives, the impression grew that they were the first steps toward the goal of eventually removing the Qaddafi government.

Against the government of Yitzhak Shamir, whose refusal to abandon a settlements policy was seen by Washington to pose an obstacle to peace, the Bush administration withdrew the conditional promise of loan guarantees it had earlier made to the Israeli government. It was undoubtedly aware that the issue might well open up the larger question of the economic and military aid—amounting to more than $4 billion in 1991—that successive Israeli governments have come to view as critical to the country's security and well being. In withdrawing the guarantees, the American govern-

ROBERT W. TUCKER is the author, with David C. Hendrickson, of *The Imperial Temptation*, from the Council on Foreign Relations.

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ment did not hide its strong preference that the forthcoming elections in Israel result in a new and more tractable government. At the same time, Washington signaled that a new chapter in the American-Israeli relationship had begun.

Iraq, Libya, and Israel are test cases of the Bush administration's new world order. Taken together, they represent the latest installment of the vision proclaimed by President Bush during the Gulf crisis, and in what promises to be its most important area of application. It was in the Middle East that the critical event occurred that first evoked the vision of the new world order. It is in ensuring access to the oil of the Persian Gulf that the United States continues to provide a vital security function for Western Europe and Japan. Shorn of its dominant role in the region, the United States would lose a major source of its remaining influence over the states that were it's principal allies in the cold war. With some exaggeration, it may be said that what Western Europe was to the old order of the Truman Doctrine and containment, the Middle East is to the new order that has been proclaimed for the post-cold war world. Had containment failed in Europe, success elsewhere would not have saved it. In the old order, Europe was crucial to the maintenance of a favorable global balance of power. To secure and protect that balance formed the great imperative of American policy for more than four decades.

In President Bush's purported new order, there is no other hostile great power against which American power must be balanced. Instead, the vision of a new world order responds to threats held out by aggressive and expansionist middle or small states that cannot threaten the global balance but are seen to hold out a threat to international order, above all, because weapons of mass destruction threaten to become increasingly available, even to states of modest means. The prospect of future Iraqs is the presumed danger. The war against Iraq, Defense Secretary Richard Cheney declared at the time, "presages very much the type of conflict we were most likely to confront again in this new era—major regional contingencies against foes well armed with advanced conventional and unconventional weaponry." Allowed to go unchecked, it is argued, this kind of challenge might come to represent the functional equivalent of the great power threat of yesterday. Nowhere does this new threat seem more likely to arise than in the Middle East. Yet nowhere is the imperative of order more apparent given the energy resources of the region.

The new world order points to a significant change in U.S. Middle East policy, despite an apparent continuity of American interests in the region. The end of the cold war has greatly facilitated the pursuit of American interests, as the Gulf war strikingly illustrated. The sudden disappearance of Soviet power from the Middle East means that in dealing with indigenous threats to American interests there, the risks of yesterday have sharply declined. The fear of a superpower confrontation, which once constituted the principal constraint on American power in the region, has vanished. In consequence, the Bush administration finds itself with much greater freedom to pursue long-standing interests. More critically, it has concluded from the Gulf war that it now has the means to vindicate those interests. It believes that the disparity in the past between the means and ends of policy, between the power we were able and willing to employ and the interests we sought to secure, has been overcome.

The passing of the cold war and the demonstration of American power in the Gulf war have put an end, the administration believes, to what was once the Achilles' heel of America's Middle East diplomacy. At the same time, these momentous events have opened the way to a more expansive view of interest. For the first time, an administration sees itself in a position to bring order and peace to the Middle East at a bearable cost. For the first time as well, it sees the Middle East as the critical testing ground for a still greater scheme of order.

It is against this background that the Bush administration's role in the Arab-Israeli peace process that began in Madrid must be understood. The administration's insistence this past year on making progress in resolving the Palestinian problem, its determination to confront the Israeli government over the settlements issues, and its unusual openness in pushing for a more tractable leadership in Jerusalem must in large part be seen in light of the much more ambitious role it has cast for the nation. This role implies a degree of mastery over the Middle East that American governments scarcely aspired to in the past.

The new American policy has cast this nation as never before in the role of guarantor of security and order in the region. That role requires not only that aspirants to regional hegemony be put down, but also that in dealing with the region's perennial conflict, the United States show an evenhandedness appropriate to its position. Evenhandedness bids the American government to seek progress toward resolving the Palestinian issue, if only because the absence of progress forms a challenge to the role this administration now claims. If the administration does not show movement on the Palestinian issue, Saddam Hussein's position in the Gulf crisis might gain a retrospective credibility in the eyes of much of the Arab world. And though the American government rejected the claim to linkage between Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the Palestinian quest for self-determination, it nevertheless promised that once the crisis was past, its efforts would again be addressed to a pacific settlement of the problem.

Indeed, both during and following the Gulf crisis, the Bush administration consistently justified its stand partly in terms of the precious opportunity a successful resolution would engender for settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. To be sure, this was not the first time an administration found in war in the Mideast an opportunity for achieving peace through a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In presenting the Reagan plan in the wake of the 1982 war in Lebanon, George Shultz

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aft

WHERE WE STAND

Finding New Ways to Improve Student Achievement

By Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers

Most educational literature about raising student achievement zooms right in on the schools. How can we make them better so that students will learn more? But improving schools is not the only way of improving educational outcomes.

In other industrialized countries, students who do not learn very well in school can combine schoolwork with an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships give kids practical experience, but they do a lot more. Many young people find school learning too abstract; they are not good at manipulating symbols, which is what most traditional school learning requires. They think and learn better when faced with a specific problem—like how to repair a car or arrange a two-week tour of India. Apprenticeships increase these kids' achievement by giving them a chance to work in a real-life setting.

Apprenticeships like these are a 20th-century version of a traditional way of training young workers. A recent study suggests that there is another time-honored way of educating the young that we should take a new look at: the transfer of knowledge from parents to children.

Parents are kids' first teachers, but what children learn from them is not necessarily good. Children whose parents have done poorly in school are likely to do poorly too. If there are no books around and if they never see their parents read, children are unlikely to become readers. If parents don't talk to them about the importance of education, youngsters probably won't care about doing well in school. Their school achievement—and their prospects for employment when they leave school—will probably repeat their parents' pattern.

We often seem to assume that schools are the only places where students learn.

Is there any way of breaking this pattern or must it be passed on from generation to generation? "Teach the Mother and Reach the Child," a recent study by Sandra Van Fossen and Thomas G. Sticht, suggests that we can. The study of 463 unemployed mothers in nine centers all over the country shows that, when these women took courses to improve their employability and literacy, their children's achievement in school was also likely to improve. Forty-six percent of children whose mothers took part in literacy training got better grades; 45 percent did better on standardized tests; 46 percent read more; 39 percent had better school attendance; 52 percent reported that they liked school more. Altogether, "65 percent of children benefitted from their mother's participation in an education program."

Interviews with parents and children quoted in the study suggest how important the experience was to them. One child said he was glad his mother was going to school because "she read me and my sisters stories and showed us words in books." A mother said that she had learned a lot about teaching her own child from watching her teachers: "Patience is something I am learning and I am using it with my son." All the mothers in one program indicated that they now regularly talked about the importance of education with their children.

The experience of the paraprofessionals in New York City schools bears out the study's findings. The paras were originally mostly high school dropouts who got jobs as classroom assistants and a chance to continue their education. Many did so and became teachers themselves. But at the same time, they found that "going back to school" affected radically the way they worked with their own children.

"Teach the Mother and Reach the Child" suggests several things about improving the achievement of poor youngsters. We tend to think primarily in terms of giving extra help to young children from disadvantaged backgrounds before they enter first grade. Head Start, for example, is designed to give them a boost so they can start school on a level with other children, and it has worked very well. The approach suggested in this study is also very promising. If giving mothers some extra schooling means that their attitude towards their children's schooling becomes more positive and the child is more likely to learn, we are helping two for the price of one. This is a good use of money in hard times. (And if the extra schooling helps the mother get a job, it's triply good.)

Intervening in this way also increases the likelihood that the mother will reinforce what goes on in school. A teacher can make progress working a couple of hours a day with children. But what happens when kids go home to places where no one urges them to do their homework or reads them stories or admires the pictures they drew that day? Gains in school that are not cultivated at home are likely to be lost. But if a parent is able to make school learning a part of a child's life at home, it's more likely to stick and give the child something to build on.

We often seem to assume that schools are the only places where students learn, so we put full reliance—and full responsibility—on schools for raising student achievement. We need to find ways of making schools better. But we should not neglect the other settings where learning can take place—and where students can get a kind of help that schools aren't designed to provide. We need to explore some of them and take advantage of what they have to offer.

To get a copy of "Teach the Mother and Reach the Child," send $19 to Wider Opportunities for Women, 1325 G St., N.W., (LL), Washington, D.C. 20005.

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declared: "If this opportunity is allowed to pass it may never come again." But Lebanon was an opportunity created by the arms of others, whereas the Gulf is an opportunity created by American arms. A failure to exploit that opportunity cannot but result in a loss of credibility in the Arab world. Moreover, in the absence of progress toward peace, that same world cannot be deprived of its principal justification for acquiring arms—with results like those we have seen in the past.

None of these views, of course, is persuasive. The Gulf war did not open up a great opportunity for settling the Palestinian conflict. Nor will the failure to achieve and negotiate a settlement to that conflict destroy America's credibility in the Arab world; nor even will such a failure of itself doom the region to yet another war. But whatever the intrinsic problems with this view, there seems little reason to doubt that George Bush and James Baker subscribe to it. At this fortuitous juncture, the administration is no longer content to see the actors in the Middle East drama deal with their conflicts largely in their own way provided traditional American interests are not jeopardized. For those interests—assured access to oil and Israel's security—no longer reflect the extent of the Bush administration's ambitions. The requirements of the new world order go well beyond what must now appear to be by comparison a narrow conception of interest. In the Bush administration's new order, interest demands that Israel's former freedom of action be severely circumscribed. This can only mean that the strongest military power in the region relinquish the strategic independence that until the Gulf war formed the hallmark of its policy.

It is ironic that having pressured the United States to wage a preventive war for an object in which it was vitally interested, Israel conceded an American role in providing for Israel's security, and thus in the broader resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, one that had not existed before. Prior to the Gulf war, Israel's strategic doctrine had always been based on the conviction that it would not rely on others—pre-eminently, the United States—to satisfy its security needs. While gladly accepting American financial and military assistance, this assistance was not to compromise its freedom of action. In matters of war and peace it disdained the assistance of others. It would take care of itself.

The Gulf crisis seriously impaired Israel's strategic doctrine and the position of independence that doctrine implied. Israel insisted from the outset of the crisis that the United States do for it what Israel had before always done for itself. That during the war Israel stayed its hand even in the face of Iraqi missile attacks also compromised its position of strategic independence, though much less so than did its previous pressure on Washington to take military action. Indeed, having so persistently urged the American government to go to war against Iraq, Israel had placed itself under an obligation not to create difficulties for this country in prosecuting the war. Its passivity under attack was the price Washington exacted and Israel reluctantly paid. This is not to endorse the president's claim after the war to Israeli gratitude for having defended that nation at the risk of American lives. The claim was without basis, the administration having gone to war for its own reasons, of which concern for Israeli security was distinctly secondary. Even so, it is true that the Israeli government had pressured the United States to undertake war against Iraq. In doing so, it helped to set the stage for the Bush administration's assumption of a role that, were it once to materialize fully, would deprive Israel of its strategic independence. In this outcome, nemesis would once again appear as the realization of desire.

Thus the Gulf war not only inaugurated the new world order, it foreshadowed the position Israel is likely to occupy in this order. The logic of the new dispensation requires that progress be made toward a resolution of the Palestinian issue. But such progress in turn requires the kinds of concession Israel has to date been unwilling to make. To the extent that this unwillingness is rooted in conventional security considerations, it is very likely to be maintained by any government Israel might have in the foreseeable future. The hope that the departure of the Shamir government will mark a real improvement in the prospects for the peace process is almost certainly an illusion if it is rooted in the expectation that a new government will take a softer view of Israel's security requirements. What a Labor government headed by Yitzhak Rabin will do is to make security alone rather than history, ideology, and security the basis for Israel policy. Even so, the other hard issues that, if anything, have become more intractable with time will remain.

How might an American government that is still determined to mark progress in resolving the Palestinian conflict cut through these issues? If it is to press the Israelis on the need to take some risks for peace, how is it to persuade those expected to trade territory for peace that the risks in doing so are nevertheless warranted? Given that the administration cannot deny a still real threat to Israel, and given that a threat to end the special relationship with Israel would still pose grave domestic political risks, the only plausible alternative is the way foreshadowed by the Gulf war—an American security guarantee to Israel. This would provide the basis—rather than the Arab promise of peace—on which territory might then be given up. An American guarantee would presumably render largely irrelevant long-standing objections to the principle of trading territory for peace. If the United States is to guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of Israel, the administration could argue, it does not matter that the Arabs have changed but little in their essential attitude toward Israel. Nor does it matter, on this reasoning, that what may appear at the time as a settlement of the Palestinian issue will subsequently turn out to have been an illusion. What matters is the American guarantee and an arrangement that presumably ensures Israeli security against the vicissitudes of the Arab world.

There is, of course, a price Israel must pay for this

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solution to its security concerns. It must give up its strategic independence, an independence that if qualified in the past by virtue of America's economic and military assistance was never really compromised. In the new world order, it will have to be compromised—indeed, given up. A solution that was once ruled out by the cold war has now become a necessary condition for achieving the Bush administration's aspirations in the Middle East.

It may be taken for granted that Israel would resist this future. Not only would the terms of an American-inspired settlement in all likelihood go beyond what any prospective Israeli government is prepared seriously to consider, but the result of agreeing to such terms and accepting an American guarantee would be the loss of strategic independence. Israel would become a protected country; the first law of the Zionist state's political life would be clearly broken. Yet against a determined American government, Israeli resistance would be very difficult. It would be very difficult not simply because its legitimacy in the world today is also largely dependent on its ties to this country. Cut adrift economically from the United States, Israel would still survive. But cut adrift economically *and* politically from the United States, its future would be quite dark.

Why should an American government pursue a course that promises to lead either to Israel's increased dependence on this country or to a dangerous isolation? Surely the answer cannot be that with the end of the cold war we must also end a conflict that has taken so much of our attention and energy, not to speak of the demands it has placed on our purse. An American-inspired settlement would not reduce the attention and energy that conflict has required of us in the past. If anything, it would have the opposite result. Having imposed—at least, in part—a settlement on the Israelis, we would have to bear responsibility for the result. We would be obliged to ensure that the settlement worked in the manner we intended. The Israelis would have to be given assurances of a concrete and lasting character against whatever contingencies they might reasonably fear. And since, by definition, the settlement would be one that did not conform in a number of respects to their wishes, they would have to be monitored quite closely to see that they did not subvert its provisions. More to the point, since none of the Arabs is likely to be pleased with the settlements either, the United States will also have to see that they, separately or together, do not undermine its provisions.

The responsibility of guarantor would be a demanding one. If past experience is any guide, it would also be costly. It is often forgotten how costly previous Middle East settlements have been for the United States. The principle that compromise must be compensated for has operated here with a special force. There is no apparent reason to assume it would not do so again to secure a settlement that would of necessity be little more than a series of compromises.

If success in achieving a settlement of the Palestinian issue would entail a heavy price, why do we persist in making such settlement the centerpiece of our Middle East diplomacy? It is an old question that continues to elicit old answers—answers that seem even less persuasive today. To be sure, there is one new response—the imperatives of the new world order. But this response is not dictated by the interests that once drove America's Middle East policy. The Bush vision of a new world order may require a settlement of the Palestinian problem, yet it does so for reasons that are not identical with the reasons that impelled past administrations—however mistakenly—to seek a settlement. The new world order is not a response to the security concerns of yesterday, though some of those concerns are still invoked to justify policy. It is not necessity that drives today's policy. Instead, this policy is a response to what is seen as the unparalleled opportunity afforded by the twin victories over the Soviet Union and Iraq to realize a vision of order heretofore beyond our reach. In the Middle East, the Palestinian issue provides the great test case of the new vision.

The American-Israeli relationship has thus become, ironically enough, a hostage to the Bush administration's global aspirations in a way it has not been in the past. This conclusion must prove unwelcome to those who generally support the aims of the new world order but who draw back from accepting its implications for the Arab-Israeli conflict. But however unwelcome, it is a conclusion difficult to avoid.

An abandonment of the present administration's post-cold war pretensions would not restore the American-Israeli relationship of yesterday. The intimacy of the former relationship can no more be restored than can the circumstances that made it possible. Still, a more modest vision of the American role in the world, and particularly in the Middle East, would surely alter the present troubled relationship, and in all likelihood for the better. It is, in any event, to be recommended for the Middle East, a region that will almost certainly remain resistant to American efforts to order it. The persuasion that with the end of the cold war, we can set our sights on dealing with the deep-rooted problems besetting the region is as touching as it is deluded. The pathology of the Middle East is not going to yield to our treatment. Fortunately, our real interests there do not require that we effect the kind of change for alien societies we seem incapable of effecting, although on a far smaller scale, at home.

A more modest vision of the American role would not only influence the way we view the Palestinian issue. An attitude of measured detachment shown toward that issue could be expected in time to become manifest in a declining support for the level of aid granted Israel. Provided such decline occurred over a reasonable period, one that allowed the recipient to make the necessary adjustments, the result might prove to be desirable for both parties, though particularly for Israel. A culture of dependency, with all the deformations that follow from dependency, might at last be broken. •

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The End of Equality?

In June TNR published an excerpt from Mickey Kaus's new book, The End of Equality. *Below, Contributing Editor Robert Kuttner responds to both the article and the book from which it is drawn. Kaus's reply follows.*

In "The End of Equality" (TNR, June 22), drawn from his new book of the same title, Mickey Kaus contends that merit and social equality—both liberal ideals—are opposites, and that liberal egalitarians are misguided. Kaus professes egalitarian values, but discerns an alarming paradox: meritocracy, if ever truly achieved, will lead only to greater inequality. For the more efficiently the meritocratic principle sorts out the worthy from the unworthy, the more stratified society will become. And unlike aristocratic or hereditary societies of the past, which lacked legitimacy, an unequal society based on merit will be hard to challenge.

Kaus, however, offers a deus ex machina, which he insists is a new brand of liberalism—the creation of a broader "public sphere" of community life, which would transcend and offset the widening inequality of the private market sphere. "That [civic] sphere could include some old institutions, such as the draft, and some new ones, such as national service" as well as national health insurance and universal child care.

I want to argue that Kaus has stumbled back to the mainstream of postwar liberalism; like other explorers, he believes he has discovered a new world that contradicts traditional liberalism. In fact, he has returned to social democracy. For better than half a century, such thinkers as William Beveridge, Richard Titmuss, T. H. Marshall, and R. H. Tawney in Britain, as well as leading Swedish and German social democrats and the architects of American social insurance, have argued that the market realm generates inequalities that cannot be justified by morality, social justice, or economic efficiency. In a capitalist economy, pure income redistribution via taxes and transfer payment will only take us so far. So we need a civic realm of what the British Fabians called "the social wage," not only to provide basic amenities to people as citizens rather than as consumers, but to remind us of our commonality as human beings. Some of these institutions involve entitlements—to health care, day care, or free public education; others involve obligations, to military or civilian national service, or obligatory voting. Still others, such as trade unions, co-ops, or non-profit institutions, exist in a civic space, independent of the market.

I'm delighted Kaus has emerged as a kind of latter-day social democrat. My problem has to do with how he gets there.

First, Kaus is convinced there is a conceptual wall between civic equality and money equality. But as a political fact, the greater the degree of money inequality, the harder it will be to build a society that includes institutions he and I value as citadels of civic equality.

Far from a greater move toward a new public sphere, we are witnessing a splintering of the puny public realm we have. The scorn directed at public education and the move toward school vouchers is exhibit A. There is no push from affluent feminists for public day care, because they have private nannies. Kaus fails to acknowledge the link between economics and politics: the more unequal society's money realm, the harder it becomes to win public support for civic equality. That is why we need greater equality of incomes as well as the kinds of civic institutions he proposes.

Incidentally, trade unions, which have been the object of Kaus's scorn on this and other occasions, are the most reliable constituency for civic equality. Why is the labor movement his bête noire? Strangely too, he now finds himself advocating that other object of neoliberal ridicule—the entitlement. Shall we means-test Kaus's proposed national health and day care systems, or admit that his realm of civic equality requires new, costly, universal entitlements?

My second criticism concerns his overly literal construction of merit and meritocracy. Kaus is far too credulous that the allocation of rewards in a "skills-based meritocracy" necessarily reflects merit. He presumes that the widening inequality of the 1980s must reflect widening gaps between the skills of the haves and have-nots, and that the "skills solution" of Bill Clinton and Robert B. Reich would only worsen the dilemma. Reich has argued in these pages and elsewhere that the open global economy allows manual jobs to migrate to low-wage countries. This undercuts what were once well-paid factory jobs, and leaves America divided into a dual economy of unskilled drudges vulnerable to foreign competition and nicely sheltered "symbolic analysts" (scientists, lawyers, NEW REPUBLIC writers). The solution is to upgrade the skills of the unwashed, which will both raise their earnings and narrow the income gap generally.

Reich can be read as implying a fallacy, which Kaus carries to an absurd conclusion. The fallacy is that if the factory workers have "earned" their declining wages by failing to work either smarter or cheaper than foreign competitors, symbolic analysts must also have earned their increasing wages. However, as Reich has noted, the most nimble symbolic analysts of the 1980s were expert mainly at analyzing just how much larceny they could commit without going to jail. Kaus seems to believe that the widening income inequality of the 1980s is a crude proxy for merit. Of course, what actually happened is not that our society suddenly became more meritocratic. Rather, the non-market institutions that militate in favor of greater income equality—trade unions, the public sector, regulatory constraints on financial speculation—took it on the chin, while those that created gross inequality were turned loose. This shift hardly reflects greater merit. Did Ross Perot "earn" $3 billion? Did Mike Milken "earn" his windfalls? If Reich is imprecise about whether pay necessarily reflects worth, Kaus compounds the error by assuming that it must. Kaus does note "the moral arbitrariness of capitalist success." But he fails to see the *economic* arbitrariness.

It is true that America would benefit from better-trained industrial workers. But this is only a small part of the income distribution story, for industrial workers are a small (and declining) fraction of the work force. As a nation we could, without sacrificing economic efficiency, choose to pay schoolteachers and nurses more, and lawyers and bond traders less.

As Kaus recognizes, within broad limits the income distribution reflects a blend of prior random events and policy choices, not economic necessities. Some conservatives would insist that Kaus's remedies—universal health insurance, day care, compulsory national service, etc.—would exact a toll on economic efficiency. Kaus evidently disagrees. Why, then, presume that our relative inequality must remain a slave to an arbitrary conception of "merit"? Contrary to Kaus, I doubt that most social scientists take

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Richard Herrnstein seriously. But even if Herrnstein were right about mating and sorting, a market economy imperfectly translates merit into wealth. What possible conception of merit, even in Herrnstein's terms, would require a society in which the boss earned a thousand times the wage of his workers?

Finally, I must take issue with Kaus's careless use of history. Success, he says, is now "passed genetically from generation to generation more than it used to be." What evidence exists for this proposition? I thought the inbreeding of the upper class was more intense a generation or two ago. Kaus discerns inbreeding within a new meritocracy, as opposed to the intermarriage of the old aristocracy. But it is far from clear that America is becoming more meritocratic. If anything, life chances are increasingly being dictated by the wealth of one's parents, which steers children to good schools, colleges, and to down payments on homes. These inherited head starts are not inherited talents.

We *can* have a more equal distribution of wealth and income, in both market and civic terms, if we want. It may be made harder because internationalization of commerce makes us more of a market and less of a mixed economy. But it's also harder because the political balance of forces has shifted against those who support the civic remedies Kaus offers. The forces he is fighting are mainly the result of ultramarketization, not increased meritocracy or Herrnsteinian "assortative mating." To the extent that Kaus is a true egalitarian, and not a convert to conservative fantasies of market meritocracy or unfounded genetic theories of intelligence, he should recognize his real allies and his real adversaries.

ROBERT KUTTNER

Mickey Kaus replies:

Kuttner argues that nothing I say "contradicts traditional liberalism." Then he criticizes me for contradicting traditional liberalism. Lawyers call this "pleading in the alternative."

My book is, in fact, largely an attack on the smug left-liberal orthodoxy Kuttner has promoted over the years in this magazine, and in his book *The Economic Illusion*. I try to distinguish between two strategies liberals might use to pursue what I think is their ultimate goal, social equality (equality in the way we treat each other in everyday life). The first strategy, Money Liberalism, tries to promote social equality by reducing money inequality. The second strategy, Civic Liberalism, promotes social equality by building a public sphere of life in which money doesn't matter. As Kuttner himself has noted ("On Civic Liberalism," TNR, June 18, 1990), most liberals, including his revered social democrats, have pursued both strategies. My argument is that, in 1992, American liberals should abandon Money Liberalism and concentrate on a Civic Liberal strategy.

Would it be easier to build a public sphere if incomes were more equal? Of course. When the affluent have more money they're better able to buy their way out of a whole range of inconvenient public institutions, from public schools to post offices. If we could push a button and give America the income distribution it had in 1972, we should do it. But there is no such button. Incomes are growing more unequal so rapidly that there is nothing liberals can do to reverse the trend.

Kuttner is deeply disingenuous about the causes of rising income among the highly skilled. For example, there are more than 60,000 taxpayers whose returns show incomes of over a million. Only a few dozen are crooks like Michael Milken. Only a few hundred are overpaid CEOs. Most, as Reich observes (and Kuttner surely knows), are people with valuable talents—athletes, entertainers, writers, hotshot bond traders, etc.—or small businessmen who've struck it rich. Yes, a large, morally arbitrary element of luck is involved in their success. But it's an element of luck that's necessary if the market is going to work.

What's Kuttner going to do, tax the affluent until they can no longer afford private schools or Federal Express? No. He admits that taxes and transfers "will only take us so far." Instead, he argues, we could simply "choose to pay schoolteachers and nurses more, and lawyers and bond traders less." How? By direct regulation of incomes? "Without sacrificing economic efficiency"? Kuttner still holds out the vague promise of a semi-socialism that retains all the nice aspects of capitalism (efficiency) and gets rid of all the nasty ones (luck, rich people). It doesn't exist. Even Sweden's powerful unions have been unable to resist the global income-inequality trend.

Instead of the herculean and futile attempt to hold back money inequality, why not focus liberal political energies on reducing the importance of those inequalities by rebuilding the public sphere? Raise the taxes necessary to create institutions such as a national health system and day care system, etc. (And, yes, save money by charging the rich more for some of these benefits—"means-testing.") Establish national service. Make the costly effort to assimilate the underclass, thereby eliminating the biggest reason why the prosperous don't like to live near (or use the same schools as) the poor. But beyond that, let the prosperous prosper. Such a strategy might appeal to both poor *and* rich Americans who value public life. It seems at least as politically viable as Kuttner's traditional poor vs. rich liberalism (which hasn't been a smashing electoral success lately).

Kuttner directs most of his fire at my arguments about "meritocracy," the part of the book excerpted in TNR. I didn't claim that success in our economy currently reflects mainly merit. It mainly reflects luck and social advantage. But reducing income inequality through training—Reich's and Clinton's "skills solution"—will decrease the role played by social advantage and increase the role played by "merit," including genetically inherited talent. And that, in turn, might give the inequality that remains a more poisonous social meaning, since those who "make it" will be tempted to think that they are smarter, and "better." Liberals who pursue the Reich/Clinton strategy will one day have to face up to this perverse consequence. Kuttner is still in the denial phase. Others aren't. Economists Lester Thurow and Frank Levy—hardly ultramarket conservatives—were among those who told me they believe "assortative mating" is on the rise, for example. Nor, to my knowledge, has anyone discredited the idea that mental abilities are, at least in large part, inherited.

A final word about unions: Is it an accident that trade unions "took it on the chin" in the '80s? No. Unionism—especially American-style unionism, with its prolific ability to generate work rules—proved an uncompetitive way to organize production. Meanwhile, public sector unions have protected incompetent civil servants and teachers. Far from being the "most reliable constituency for civic equality," they have been the most reliable force guaranteeing that civic institutions perform so poorly that anybody with enough money escapes to private-sphere alternatives. Kuttner knows this, but won't say it because he doesn't want to jeopardize his precious, imaginary coalition of left "constituencies." But the rest of us, who aren't so burdened, can say it. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Northern Exposures

Ingmar Bergman began his film career as a writer, and apparently he means to finish that way. Ten years ago, when he was 64, he said about film directing, "It has been tremendous fun, but it cannot be so much fun from now on. That's it." He has worked since then in the theater, but otherwise it has been writing only. Five years ago he published *The Magic Lantern*, an autobiography that must rank as a Bergman work of art. Then he wrote a screenplay called **The Best Intentions** (Samuel Goldwyn), but he selected someone else to direct it.

The subject is the complicated courtship and the equally complicated early married years of Bergman's parents, a clergyman from a humble social class and a nursing student from a higher class. The painful difficulties in their much-delayed union, the adjustments that both (especially she) had to make, the storms, the partings, the reconciliations, the need for each other, the persistence against reason—all these are the fabric of an extraordinary, seemingly naked film.

The very first scene, before the opening credits, sets the clenched-teeth temper. The theology student Henrik Bergman visits his grandfather, whom he dislikes. The old man asks him to visit his ill grandmother, whom Henrik also dislikes because she behaved badly to his mother. The old man offers the threadbare student money if he will go. Henrik, stiff-necked, refuses and leaves. Loyalty, hatred, honor, acceptance of difficulty cram the screen in that short scene. *Then* come the opening credits!

Few who know Bergman's films, even if (like me) they can judge the dialogue only through subtitles, can doubt by now that he is a superb screenwriter. His films vary in fulfillment, but—and this isn't really a paradox—all of them are uniquely conceived and subtly written. The opening scene between doctor and nurse in his masterpiece *Persona* is a gem, but so is the opening dialogue in the much lesser *Hour of the Wolf*. Scene by scene *The Best Intentions* is beautifully crafted; the dialogue has the novelty that comes from perception, not from cleverness. (But why did Bergman change his parents' forenames from Erik and Karin to Henrik and Anna?)

Three hours long, the film is almost completely gripping. A hint of *longueur* touches the very last quarrel between husband and wife. But judgment in this regard, though inevitable, must be a bit tentative because *The Best Intentions*, like *Scenes from a Marriage* and *Fanny and Alexander*, is an amphibious animal: it was written with both film theater and TV in mind—and the complete TV version is in six installments of an hour each.

The theater "condensation" was, as always, Bergman's own decision. But no filmmaker in history has been more sensitive to the synergy between form and content. If six hours were in Bergman's mind from the outset, how can we really know the work until we see the whole from which the theater film was hewn? If there are flaws—minor but discomfiting—we can tell ourselves that they'll be amended if PBS gives us the chance to see the TV version. Which is what happened with *Scenes from a Marriage*.

For instance, the TV version may amplify a few elements that here seem compressed, such as the relationship between Henrik and his mother, which is treated in only a few scenes. And there is a strand in the story about a small boy named Petrus (sensitively played by Elias Ringquist), battered and lonely in the northern town where the young clergyman has his first parish, who is taken into their home by Henrik and Anna. Because of developments connected with their own first child, they are forced to send Petrus away after a few months, and the spiky-haired, utterly desolate lad is bundled off. This is the last we see or hear of him. I expected some word about him, possibly word of a disaster, but nothing came. Perhaps there is a conclusion in the TV version.

However, comments on the screenplay as such are necessarily incomplete because Bergman, of all people on earth, didn't write his screenplay to be judged as a manuscript. As always he meant it as a component—primary, but still only one component of a film. And in its cinematic realization, with one demurral, *The Best Intentions* is splendid.

In Copenhagen last year a woman from the Danish Film Office told me proudly that, after Bergman had finished his screenplay, he looked over possibilities among Scandinavian directors and chose Bille August, the Dane who had directed *Pelle the Conqueror*. A wonderful film, a wonderful choice by

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Hairdresser's Husband. *French erotic fantasy, about a man who fulfills his adolescent dream of marrying a woman who barbers men. Slight but steamy. (Reviewed 7/27/92)* **Howards End.** *E. M. Forster is pretty well adapted and splendidly acted, chiefly by Vanessa Redgrave, Emma Thompson, and Anthony Hopkins. James Ivory's best directing. (3/23/92)* **A League of Their Own.** *Based on fact—a female professional league during World War II—it gets some laughs and tears out of a journeyman script. Tom Hanks is a manager, Geena Davis his star player. (8/3/92)* **Monster in a Box.** *A talk (essentially) by Spalding Gray—witty, articulate, shrewd—about his adventures while writing a novel. The manuscript is the monster that he carried about with him in a box. (7/6/92)* **—SK**

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Bergman, a wonderful result. My Danish friend was right to be proud.

Some of the sequences are reminders of Bergman—the summery scenes of *Wild Strawberries*, the Christmas celebrations of *Fanny and Alexander*—but August has his own temperament, his own dynamics. To put it in brusque summary, Bergman directed in strokes, flashes, metaphors, epiphanies (in Joyce's sense); August directs in longer lines, in closer correspondences to the motions of daily life. To put it even more reductively, Bergman directed like a poet, August directs like a novelist. Of course August could not have done it without the Bergman script, but this may be an additional reason that Bergman didn't want to do it himself: he may have felt that it called for a cinema-novelist's hand.

And August does it beautifully. He has an eye for nuance, for point of address, and, quite evidently, for the use of actors as chamber musicians. He makes the environment serve the subject. The interiors never seem like quaint old photographs; the exteriors, especially those in the far north where Henrik has his first church, never look like calendar-art inserts. They are all in the order of this film's being.

August has had first-class collaborators. The cinematographer, Jorgan Persson, who did *Pelle* and *My Life as a Dog*, understands the light and air of the north, understands that Swedes live much of the time in a contrast between the umber of interiors and the vastness of white landscapes. Janus Billeskov Jansen, the editor, proceeds as if the actors themselves were editing the film, causing the frame to move from one to another in the flow and rhythm of what is happening. The production designer, Anna Asp, who did *Pelle* and *Fanny and Alexander*, and the costume designer, Ann-Mari Anttila, are careful never to ravish the eye: they satisfy it.

Samuel Fröler, who plays Henrik, is my one reservation about the cast. He has only about four-fifths of the interior territory needed for this anguished, stubborn, lonely man. If the film as an entity never quite plumbs the fullest emotional depths and darkness, it's because Fröler can't get there. On the other hand, Pernilla August (the director's wife) seems to breathe herself into Anna, as if her spirit had entered Anna's body instead of vice versa. All of Anna's pride and desperation and forbearance and strength flow to us from Anna, not from August.

Max von Sydow plays her ailing, kingly, gentle father, and no praise is necessary after von Sydow's name is mentioned. Ghita Nørby, the only Dane in the cast, plays Anna's mother with the silken abrasion that comes from parental ego parading as parental concern. Among the many others, a special salute to Lena Endre, the waitress with whom Henrik is having an affair when he meets Anna, and to Lennart Hjulström, the intransigent but troubled factory owner in Henrik's first parish.

The story runs from 1909, when Henrik and Anna meet, to 1918 when Dag, their first son, is 4 and when Ernst Ingmar, as he himself says, "was still inside my mother, preparing to emerge into life." In a way, this account of his parents' early years helps explain Bergman's affinity with Strindberg. His parents had elements in their relationship of a true Strindberg agon: two people whose lives could not be peaceful together but who could not live apart.

The very last shot crystallizes their condition. Anna has left Henrik because she cannot abide the northern town and has gone home to her mother in Uppsala. After a time, Henrik follows. He finds her seated on a bench in a wintry park. He sits on the bench next to hers. They talk. They agree to rejoin: he will leave the northern town and accept a post in Stockholm. At the last we see them seated on two benches in a wide expanse, together but separate.

And the son who is to write about them is there, too, not yet quite born. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

Wilson Lights Stein's Lights

In July, Robert Wilson made one of his rare appearances in this country with his Hebbel-Theater production of Gertrude Stein's **Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights**. It is only one of many Wilson projects now in workshop, in rehearsal, in performance, and on tour. His latest calendar—a mimeographed document he distributes semiannually to friends and collaborators—not untypically records seven productions over seven months in twenty-five different cities. Most of these will be staged in Europe, where Wilson usually spends his creative time. Apart from a handful of projects originated by American theater companies (such as Wilson's forthcoming production of *Danton's Death*, now being prepared with Houston's Alley Theater, and a touring revival of *Einstein on the Beach*), the Texas-born artist usually appears before native audiences through subsidized foreign exchanges. Our country simply does not have the resources—or, I fear, the sense or sensibility—to support his epic imagination on a continuing footing.

Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights, which opened the Serious Fun Festival at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, is not one of Wilson's more grandiose creations. It lasts but ninety minutes—about 167 hours short of the seven-day *KA MOUNtain and GUARDenia Terrace*—and employs only twelve actors. Two of these are professional. The rest are students in training at the Ernst Busch Theater School in East Berlin. (Many are taking their first trip beyond a border once barred by the Wall.) Wilson's work with these student actors is an extension of his lifelong interest in young people. His very first piece, *Deafman Glance*, was inspired by a deaf black child named Raymond Andrews. Succeeding works were made in collaboration with Christopher Knowles, an autistic youth. And his celebrated *Hamletmachine* was developed with undergraduate theater students from NYU.

Wilson's task in the current production was not only to train bodies unskilled in his meticulous choreographic demands but, with the aid of elocutionist Bernd Kunstmann, to drill foreign tongues in the eccentric Basic English of Gertrude Stein. This language they articulate in a flatly accented Germanic style, adding an exotic piquancy to the already distanced activities on stage.

I can't say I'm a great fan of Stein's later writings, which often strike me as weighted down with repetitive preciosity. It was reputedly Stein's intention to make nonsense so intrusive that it begins to approximate sense. Sometimes this works: her famous "a rose is a rose is a rose" is a good shorthand way of warning writers to avoid flowery symbolic connotations. More often her repetitions seem to me a lazy method of keeping her motor idling. One cannot, on the other hand, deny Stein her place as a pioneer of postmodernism, which makes Wilson the perfect director for her plays. What Wilson does with *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* is integrate many of the traditions of the American post-

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modernist school, from the prepared sounds of John Cage to the spasmodic choreography of Merce Cunningham to the Eastern-inspired minimalism of Philip Glass to the eerie compositions of Meredith Monk to the robotic technology of Laurie Anderson, mixing them all with his own genius for precision lighting, furniture design, and stage setting, and adding a hint of German expressionism for good measure.

The production features a Wilson-lettered stage curtain, which encloses Stein's title in a morass of repetition ("Thank You Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights the Lights Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights or Faustus Lights the Lights," etc.). After raising the curtain on a man holding a pair of calipers to his head, Wilson parallels Stein's linguistic repetitions by splitting the characters: three actors perform Doctor Faustus, three play Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel (Stein's name for Goethe's Gretchen), and two enact a Red and Black Mephisto. Other characters include a barking dog who snaps its jaws and says, "Thank you," a little boy in white, a Mr. Viper who kills Marguerite and sends her to hell, and a Country Woman on stilts who carries a scythe. Originally planned as an opera, but lacking a composer, the work has found a brilliant one in Wilson's frequent collaborator Hans Peter Kuhn, who contributes a striking sound score consisting of the shattering of broken glass, comic bleeps, snippets of oompah band music, and synthesized flourishes reminiscent of computer games like Super Mario. The frisky music and Wilson's own whimsicality endow the text with continuous playfulness.

Since it was Stein's intention to create a literature without logic, this dense and gnomic work defies interpretation. As the title suggests, however, the author was apparently intrigued with the invention of electricity. Stein's Faustus, more akin to Goethe's than to Marlowe's, possesses an overweening passion to achieve the unknown, and being modeled also on Edison, he sacrifices his soul to see the light ("Oh Doctor Faustus, do say that you are the only one who can turn night into day"). A wizard of lighting, Wilson has chosen to make electricity the central image of his production, not an inconsiderable feat considering the limited technical resources of Alice Tully Hall. At one point, a large number of globular incandescent light bulbs actually float down from the flies, but the stage is always awash in rays of every color and size, including suspended neon booms and illuminated rectangular beams.

What plot there is concerns the effort of Faustus to join Marguerite in hell after the viper has ended her life. Before death separates them, the two have plighted their troth ("I am the only he and you are the only she and we are the only we"). Mephisto tells Faustus that a man without a soul can only go to hell by killing someone, and Faustus responds, to an ineffably sad piano accompaniment, by drawing his index finger across the throat of the Boy, who falls slowly to the ground, then of the Dog, who expires with a silent scream. Though Mephisto endows him with the gift of youth, Marguerite does not recognize the rejuvenated Faustus because she knows he is old and cannot go to hell. He speaks his last words, "Leave me alone," isolated on stage as the rectangular screen behind him diminishes to nothing.

This description cannot begin to convey the actual theatrical experience, its visual beauty and aural delights, its uncannily precise choreography and continuous surprises. Without Wilson's unifying imagination, Stein's text would be a series of arbitrary effects, lacking a coherent animating idea. But by illuminating *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* as an avant-garde musical comedy, reinforced by the high spirits and daring of his young cast, Wilson has redeemed a difficult play and again confirmed his place as one of the most original theater artists of our time.

Another overseas company recently visited our shores: the Royal National Theater, touring with its celebrated **Richard III**. Opening at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on the tour's first leg, this production was graced with three major contributions—a demonic performance by Ian McKellen in the role of Richard, a powerful concept by Richard Eyre as director, and a striking minimal set by Bob Crowley. The rest of the touring company was merely competent, yet serviceable enough to support a riveting, virtually uncut interpretation of the play. In London during the same season, the National Theater produced *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, a Brecht work dealing with the ascension of Hitler and partly inspired by *Richard III*. It did this badly. As if in atonement, the National's *Richard III* has been inspired by *Arturo Ui*, and comes off very well.

This is, in fact, one of the best simile productions I have yet seen (a simile production being one that updates a classical play in order to establish a historical "as if"). It takes up where Ingmar Bergman's *Hamlet* left off, with a political monarchy succumbing to virulent fascism. McKellen's Richard, I suspect, is modeled on Sir Oswald Mosley, a British blackshirt. But where Mosley failed to persuade his countrymen of the virtues of totalitarianism, McKellen's Richard succeeds all too well, leaving us convinced that it *can* happen here.

An act curtain emblazoned with the name of Edward IV rises on a series of explosions; Richard emerges out of the smoke wearing the khaki greatcoat of a British officer in the "piping time of peace" between the wars. His reading of "Now is the winter of our discontent" is a shocker, delivered as it is in the ripe fatuous tones of an overly cultivated royal addressing the House of Lords. This Colonel Blimp may be pompous and effete, but is he capable of murdering children?

Yes. McKellen does not overstate Richard's evil any more than he exaggerates his physical deformities. But in time his persona somehow becomes more terrifying than Olivier's tenor snarls, half-closed eye, conspicuous hump, and wizened arm. McKellen illustrates his opening speech with significant ellipses (he is a master of the telling pause). Squinting like the near-sighted Mr. Magoo, he calls attention to his slight limp on the word "deformed," to the useless hand he hides in his pocket on the word "unfinished." Removing his peaked cap, he reveals that one side of his head is partially bald, decorated with stray wisps of hair. The whole left part of his body has been scorched by some monstrous stroke at birth.

Richard's scene with Lady Anne is less persuasive. Her swift capitulation to the man who killed her father and her brother is hard enough to play convincingly, but it's impossible to believe that this fashionably dressed flapper could ever be attracted to such a stiff patrician fop, even when he unbuttons his tunic with one good hand, bares his breast, and offers her his bayonet. If McKellen's Richard is insufficiently sensual, he hardly lacks for menace or cruelty. While Queen Margaret rants on about the death of her husband, he concentrates indifferently on dinner, and after she leaves, lights a post-prandial cigarette off one of the candles.

Slowly, subtly, Richard and his followers begin to exchange their khaki uniforms for blackshirts, armbands, and jackboots. In a scene staged like a Nuremberg rally, Richard, barking into a mike from a raised platform, denies all interest in the throne, despite roars from an enthusiastic crowd. Finally accepting the crown, he rips off his armband in a gesture that ends in a Nazi salute as a curtain bearing the name Richard III in German gothic type descends over tumultuous cheers.

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The second part does not possess equal theatrical power, largely because Shakespeare's play degenerates from a fascinating character portrait into desultory scenic pageantry, ending with Richard's defeat at the hands of Richmond. Eyre fails to find a convincing contemporary analogy for the ghost scenes, and the battles are routine. But that's no matter—McKellen's Richard remains vivid and compelling. An actor I have often thought of as a mannered star personality, substituting elocution for depth, succeeds here in making verbal affectations the basis for a powerful political personification. •

Why Americans should be wary of self-esteem.

For Shame

By Christopher Lasch

Those who write about shame like to begin by deploring the shameful neglect of the subject by their predecessors. If they happen to be psychiatrists, they insist that shame has been not just neglected, but actively suppressed. The time has come, they say, to lift the curtain of censorship and "bring shame out of the closet," in the words of Michael P. Nichols. Their self-conception requires the imagery of bold exploration, of the conquest of forbidden territory. Even when they reject everything else in Freud's work—and the current vogue of shame coincides with a growing reaction against Freud—the current generation of psychotherapists finds his iconoclasm irresistible: his air of defying accepted canons of modesty and reticence, his insistence on speaking the unspeakable.

Freud had good reason to see himself as a lonely intruder bravely risking his professional life in pursuit of knowledge everyone else preferred to conceal. The new archaeologists of shame, on the other hand, enter a field already mined by anthropologists, by the postwar generation of psychoanalysts (many of them refugees from Nazi Germany and well acquainted with the social repercussions of shame), and for that matter by Dale Carnegie and Norman Vincent Peale, who discovered the importance of self-esteem long before psychiatrists and developmental psychologists agreed to define shame as the absence of self-esteem and began to prescribe appropriate remedies. Shame, the latest site of intensive excavation by theorists and clinicians in search of buried treasure, is no longer a neglected, let alone a forbidden, subject. Donald L. Nathanson himself admits that it has become more than a little "trendy."

Anyway, the charge of concealment looks implausible on its face. Is there anything our culture still attempts to conceal—anything, that is, that can be exploited for its shock value? Nothing can shock us anymore, least of all intimate revelations about personal life. The mass media do not hesitate to parade the most outlandish perversions, the most degraded appetites. Moralists advise us that words like "outlandish," "perverse," and "degraded" belong to a discredited, excessively "judgmental" vocabulary of hierarchy and discrimination. The only thing forbidden in our culture of exposure is the inclination to forbid—to set limits on disclosure.

Instead of asking how we can lift the conspiracy of silence supposedly surrounding shame, we should ask why it gets so much attention in a shameless society. A part of the answer lies in the double meaning of shame. The word refers to a decent respect for privacy, but also to the fear of disgrace. The first kind of shame becomes objectionable when carried to extremes, but an exaggerated sense of propriety obviously doesn't rank very high on the scale of contemporary social problems.

Current usage sticks to the second sense of shame, and even that has lost its moral resonance: shame, these days, refers to whatever prevents us from "feeling good about ourselves." Disgrace implies a failure to live up to internalized codes of honor. Today it is widely believed that people come to grief when they adopt "society's" standards as their own. They are advised to set their own goals instead of conforming to what others expect of them. Formerly shame was the fate of those whose conduct fell short of cherished ideals. Now that ideals are suspect, it refers only to a loss of self-esteem.

How did shame come to lose so much of its meaning? Some of this shrinkage can be attributed to the "feel-good movement," as *Newsweek* calls it, which has made self-esteem a national obsession. Otherwise known as "empowerment," self-esteem is held up as the cure for everything that ails us. Legislatures appoint special commissions to study it. Schools try to promote it by abolishing failing grades or forbidding the word "bad." Churches redefine sin as the failure to live up to "your own potential." An authority on child-rearing writes *101 Ways to Make Your Child Feel Special*. Gloria Steinem discovers a "revolution from within," the secret of which is a heightened sense of self-esteem: "Seeing through your own eyes instead of through the eyes of others." According to Steinem, self-esteem requires the abolition of shame, which makes people feel "intrinsically sinful" or otherwise unworthy.

Clearly shame loses much of its moral content when it becomes merely the opposite of self-esteem. But our current understanding of shame has also been distorted and diminished by attempts to distinguish it from guilt. At first sight, such a distinction seems an important prerequisite of conceptual clarity. Anyone who thinks seriously about shame feels the need for some such distinction. Yet a review of shame's conceptual career, in the professional discourse of cultural anthropology and psychotherapy, leaves the impression that theoretical investment in this question has been curiously misplaced. No one has ever explained why so much rides on the difference between shame and guilt. When this becomes the overriding issue, both concepts undergo a certain trivialization. Guilt loses the suggestion of conscientious self-condemnation, while the element of self-condemnation in shame comes to be viewed merely as an unfortunate byproduct of unrealistic expectations.

The story begins in the 1930s, when comparative studies of socialization patterns prompted anthropologists to distinguish between shame cultures and guilt cultures. Shame, they argued, sets up a purely external sanction for good conduct, whereas guilt internalizes a sense of right and wrong. This interpretation soon proved untenable, but speculation about shame, which passed from anthropology to psychology, continued to be dominated by the effort to distinguish it from guilt. In 1953 Gerhart Piers and Milton B. Singer demolished

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the distinction worked out by cultural anthropologists and replaced it with one drawn from Piers's elaboration of the psychoanalytic theory of the superego.

They argued convincingly that shame was just as deeply internalized as guilt. But whereas guilt internalized the fear of punishment, in their view, shame internalized the fear of rejection—the parent, say, who simply turns away in disgust. If the unconscious image of the castrating father haunted the guilty conscience, shame rested on the even more terrifying threat of abandonment. In technical terms, guilt took its cue from the punishing aspect of the superego, shame from the loving and beloved aspect (the ego ideal). Guilt issued from defiance of the father, shame from the failure to live up to his internalized example.

This distinction had a twofold effect: it robbed shame of its transgressive dimension, now reserved for guilt alone, and it encouraged a legalistic understanding of transgression itself. Piers and Singer were quite explicit about the first of these effects: "Guilt anxiety accompanies transgression; shame, failure." The second implication became unmistakable in Helen Merrell Lynd's study, *On Shame and the Search for Identity*, which appeared in 1958. Elaborating on the interpretation advanced by Piers and Singer, Lynd associated guilt not simply with "transgression of prohibitions" but with "violation of a specific taboo," a feeling therefore concentrated on "each separate, discrete act." In Lynd's account, guilt moved away from its old association with sin and came to be assimilated to the category of crime—and finally to any kind of merely unconventional conduct. In an older moral tradition, sin referred not only to violations of the moral law, but also to a failure to keep faith with God. It referred not only to specific actions, but also to a disposition of the will, a chronic state of rebellion against God and the human condition. Lynd's secularized conception of guilt reduced it to the fear of punishment that follows violation of community standards, which were themselves trivialized and partially discredited as "taboos."

Cultural anthropologists made guilt, the inner voice of conscience, seem more weighty than shame; but "guilt feelings," according to Lynd, actually "result from efforts for social adjustment" and carry very little "self-reference." Now it was shame that appeared more deeply internalized. "The deepest shame is not shame in the eyes of others but weakness in one's own eyes." Shame called one's entire identity into question, shattered "basic trust" in the world, and thus could "be said to go deeper than guilt." Shame was more disturbing than its cousin, more deeply felt, more urgently in need of treatment. "It is worse to be inferior and isolated than to be wrong, to be outcast in one's own eyes than to be condemned by society." This remarkable statement, uttered in casual disregard of the accumulated weight of moral and philosophical tradition, casts a flood of light on the current preoccupation with shame and self-esteem. We fear weakness more than a troubled conscience. Indeed, conscience disappears from our conceptual order: guilt becomes condemnation by "society."

Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self
by Donald L. Nathanson
(Norton, 486 pp., $24.95)

No Place to Hide: Facing Shame So We Can Find Self-Respect
by Michael P. Nichols
(Simon and Schuster, 349 pp., $12 paper)

Shame: The Exposed Self
by Michael Lewis
(Free Press, 275 pp., $24.95)

Revolution from Within: A Book of Self-Esteem
by Gloria Steinem
(Little, Brown, 372 pp., $22.95)

Shame and Guilt in Neurosis
by Helen Block Lewis
(International Universities Press, 519 pp., $17.95)

The Mask of Shame
by Léon Wurmser
(Johns Hopkins University Press, 368 pp., $42)

Helen Block Lewis added a few details to this emerging consensus in her *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*, which appeared in 1971 and is often overpraised today as a pioneering work in the field. Lewis devoted most of her attention to variations in "proneness" to guilt or shame. Men's aggressiveness, she decided, predisposed them to guilty fears of retaliation. Women were more inclined to shame, thanks to their eagerness to please. "Girls' self-esteem is neither so objectively nor firmly grounded as boys'." Later commentators would extend this line of thinking to underprivileged groups in general. Shame could be eliminated, they maintained, by improving their collective self-image.

Léon Wurmser resisted such simplifications in *The Mask of Shame*, the best of the psychoanalytic studies of shame and quite possibly the last, given the probable collapse of the whole psychoanalytic enterprise. By 1981, when it appeared, the reaction against psychoanalysis was in full swing: a chorus of critics denounced Freud's ideas as unscientific, elitist, patriarchal, and therapeutically useless. Within psychoanalysis, Heinz Kohut and his followers had shifted the emphasis from intrapsychic conflict to the "whole self" and its relations with others. The need to counter these tendencies led Wurmser to undertake a much deeper analysis of the inner conflicts leading to shame than anything offered by his predecessors.

Thus, although he built on the work of Piers and Singer, he cautioned against excessive emphasis on the ego ideal. "A mere falling short of ego standards or even of the postulates of the ego ideal does not evoke shame." No less than guilt, shame had to be seen as a form of self-punishment, a fierce condemnation of the self that is rooted, in the case of shame, in the "absolute sense of unlovability." If this element of self-torture was missing, it was appropriate to speak only of a "loss of self-esteem." Wurmser's refusal to confuse this with shame made intelligible much that otherwise remained obscure.

Psychoanalysis, as Wurmser understood it, was above all the interpretation of inner psychic conflict and the inner defenses against it. His insistence on the "centrality of conflict," in the face of an "incessant pull away" from conflict that was making the psychoanalytic method increasingly superficial, had the added and unexpected advantage of restoring some of the moral and religious associations that once clustered around the concept of shame. Wurmser asked himself, in effect, how the same word could refer both to the impulse to pry and to the impulse to conceal. Mindful of Freud's dictum that opposites share an underlying affinity, he found that his patients were simultaneously obsessed with seeing and with being seen.

One of them, a woman suffering from anxiety, depression, and a consuming suspiciousness, told him: "I want to find out the hidden, forbidden truth about who creates and who does not create"—a statement worthy of Faust or Prometheus. But she was also consumed with the fear that her own

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secrets would be revealed. Penetrating other people's secrets (those of her parents in particular) became a way of preserving her own. Her fear of defilement and dishonor made her wish to defile others—a striking illustration of the connection between shameful disgrace and the shameless act of exposure. Another patient wished to hide her face from the world—the characteristic stance of shame—but also had a compulsion to exhibit herself. It was as if she were saying: "I want to show the world how magnificently I can hide." Here the rage for exposure was redirected to the self, in the form of an exhibitionism that "knew no shame," as we used to say.

Beneath the contradictory wish to hide and to spy, to see and be seen, Wurmser detected a deeper set of paired opposites—the "polarity" between the "yearning for boundless union" and a "murderous contempt." Both arose out of an underlying fear of abandonment. What Wurmser's patients experience as shameful is the contingency and the finitude of human life, nothing less. They cannot reconcile themselves to the intractability of limits. The record of their suffering makes us see why shame is so closely associated with the body, which resists efforts to control it and therefore reminds us, vividly and painfully, of our inescapable limitations, the inescapability of death above everything. It is man's bondage to nature, as Erich Heller once said, that makes him ashamed. "Anything that is nature about him,... anything that shows him to be enslaved by laws and necessities impervious to his will," becomes a source of unbearable humiliation, which can express itself in seemingly incompatible ways—in the effort to hide from the world, but also in the effort to penetrate its secrets. What these opposite reactions share is a kind of outrage in the face of whatever is mysterious and therefore resistant to human control. "Shame," said Nietzsche, "exists everywhere where there is a 'mystery.'"

When psychoanalysts reject the temptation to dismiss shame as the vestigial remnant of an outmoded prudery, they have much to tell us about its moral and existential implications. Wurmser's study owes its power and its clarity not only to his sensitive reporting of case histories, but also to his insistence on the philosophical dimension of psychoanalysis. He conceives his work as a "dialogue with the best minds that still speak directly to us across the abyss of death and time." It disturbs him that "the vast symbolic fields of the humanities no longer form the shared matrix in which psychoanalytic work is organically embedded." The newer studies of shame and self-esteem—only a few of which will be considered here, a small selection from a huge outpouring—owe very little to the best psychoanalytic tradition and suffer accordingly.

The decline in quality is immediately evident. The value of Donald Nathanson's *Shame and Pride*, the most ambitious of these studies, is inversely proportional to its pretensions. Nathanson wants to show that shame performs certain functions that contribute to psychic equilibrium. There may be some truth in this, but it hardly qualifies as an "entirely new way of thinking" about shame, an "entirely new theory for the nature of human sexuality," an "entirely new mode of study." Nathanson's ambitious system often seems to yield more than banalities. "Shame will occur whenever desire outruns fulfillment." "Shame affect is triggered any time interest or enjoyment is impeded." "Life is full of impediments to positive affect." "It seems that nearly everybody needs an inferior."

Nathanson thanks Wurmser for unstinting "support and assistance"—a tribute to Wurmser's generosity if not to his judgment. Nathanson's approach exemplifies precisely the behaviorism that Wurmser cautioned against. It treats "shame affect" as a "unique biological mechanism." It aims to "return psychology entirely to biological science" and to banish "mysticism." It rests on a mechanistic model of the psyche as a computer, a system for processing information. Evidently struggling for scientific precision, Nathanson writes much of the time in a barbarous jargon in which "startle" becomes a noun and "dissmell" refers to the recoil from unpleasant odors. He is deaf to the conversation of the ages, and perhaps to his patients as well, since he reports no case histories. As for his therapy, it seems to consist largely of drugs. "We stopped the medication, and the symptom disappeared." "All of these symptoms vanished when he began to take the drug *fluoxetine*." "She was astonished to see these feelings of shame disappear when she resumed her medication."

In place of the interpretation of intrapsychic conflict, Nathanson offers a mechanistic theory, derived from the work of Sylvan Tomkins, in which affect acts as an "amplifier," informing the organism of unruly appetites in need of intelligent management. Shame, an essential component in our "basic wiring pattern," protects the organism "from its growing avidity for positive

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affect." By forcing us to "know and remember our failures," it acts as a "teacher." Just what it teaches remains a little unclear: to modify our expectations? to pursue more realistic goals? Whenever his prose veers too close to clarity, Nathanson interjects an explanation that defies explanation:

> It [shame] is a biological system by which the organism controls its affective output so that it will not remain interested or content when it may not be safe to do so, or so that it will not remain in affective resonance with an organism that fails to match patterns stored in memory.

In plain English, shame keeps us from taking ourselves too seriously.

This seems to be the gist of it. Whereas Wurmser pleads for the "heroic transcendence of shame" through love and work, Nathanson recommends a kind of inoculation against shame—a healthy dose of shame in manageable amounts, such as we find in the therapeutic comedy of Buddy Hackett, that keeps it from becoming lethal. What he finds appealing, I take it, is the lowering effect of Hackett's bathroom humor. The reminder that no one escapes "the call of nature," as our grandmothers used to put it so delicately, serves both to deflate self-importance and to mock false modesty—all the more effectively, Nathanson seems to think, when it is couched in coarse, uninhibited language.

Hackett's "comedy of acceptance" reconciles us to our limitations, according to Nathanson. I think it merely encourages us to lower our sights. There is a crucial difference between the acceptance of limitations and the impulse to reduce everything exalted to its lowest common denominator. "Acceptance" becomes shameless, cynical surrender when it can no longer distinguish between nobility and pomposity, refinement of taste and social snobbery, modesty and prudery. Cynicism confuses delusions of grandeur, which call for moral and therapeutic correction, with grandeur itself.

Cynicism, of course, is the last thing Nathanson intends to promote. He wants only to replace shame with what he calls pride—a sense of accomplishment based on acceptance of our limitations. But his vaccine is worse than the disease. By recommending the deflation of ideals as the prescription for mental health, he proposes, in effect, to cure shame with shamelessness. This is itself a well-known defense (and, as such, hardly a cure)—the strategy cogently identified by Wurmser as the "lifelong reversal" of the "'shameless' cynic," the transvaluation of values by means of which "narcissistic grandiosity and contemptuousness defend against a fatal brittleness and woundedness." As Wurmser points out, this defense now sets the tone of our culture as a whole:

> Everywhere there is an unrestrained exposure of one's emotions and of one's body, a parading of secrets, a wanton intrusion of curiosity.... It has ... become hard to express tender feelings, feelings of respect, of awe, of idealization, of reverence. It almost belongs to the "good tone" to be irreverent. It is no accident that in German and Greek, words for shame are also words of reverence.... The culture of shamelessness is also the culture of irreverence, of debunking and devaluing ideals.

Trust in life carries the risk of disappointment, so we inoculate ourselves with irreverence.

Even the most obtuse students of shame understand, in principle, that shamelessness is a defensive strategy, not a real solution. In *No Place to Hide*, Michael Nichols warns that "shamelessness is a reaction formation against shame, a defiant, counterphobic attempt to deny and overcome a profound inner fear of weakness." But Nichols and his like recognize the affinity between shamelessness and shame only in its most blatant form. They can see shamelessness in "defiance" but not in their own ideology of "acceptance." The deflation of "extravagant expectations"—Nichols's favorite remedy for the oppressive sense of failure—amounts to a milder version of Nathanson's strategy of existential distrust. Thus he warns against religion, which purveys "oversimplified messages about right and wrong" and holds up impossible standards—"a vision of righteousness that remains forever out of reach." The old religions preached the sinfulness of sex and divorce, discouraged "understanding and acceptance." Fortunately "today's enlightened ministers and rabbis are preaching a humanistic acceptance of the self and the body." Indeed, they are "more attuned to humanistic concerns than most psychiatrists"—surely a backhanded compliment, though Nichols intends it as high praise.

"The story of Adam and Eve," in Nichols's retelling, "reflects the general awareness that children of nature don't know shame; they have to be taught." From this Panglossian point of view, we can rid the world of shame and many other evils simply by treating children with "empathy," engineering settings in which they can "feel good about themselves," and "validating their right to think and feel whatever they wish."

There is some value in the advice to "let them be themselves," if it helps to discourage overmanagement of children by adults. We do children a terrible disservice, however, by showering them with undeserved approval. The kind of reassurance they need comes only with a growing ability to meet impersonal standards of competence. Children need to risk failure and disappointment, to overcome obstacles, to face down the terrors that surround them. Self-respect cannot be conferred, it has to be earned. Current therapeutic and pedagogical practice, all "empathy" and "understanding," hopes to manufacture self-respect without risk. Not even witch doctors could perform a medical miracle on that order.

The early Freudians warned against "prophylactic" misapplications of psychoanalysis, as Anna Freud called them. They knew that a superficial reading of Freud encouraged the notion that enlightened methods of child-rearing could do away with suffering and neurosis. They countered this foolish optimism with the reminder that growing up is never easy, that children will never achieve maturity unless they work things out for themselves. But the helping professions paid no attention to this realism. In order to justify the expansion of therapeutic authority over the family, the school, and large areas of public policy, they made extravagant claims for their expertise. They set themselves up as doctors not only to sick patients, but to a sick society.

By 1937 Karen Horney, one of the first of the Freudian revisionists, was already insisting that "neurosis and culture" were problems "not only for psychiatrists but for social workers and teachers," for "anthropologists and sociologists," and for all those professionals, indeed, who had become "aware of the significance of psychic factors" in social life. Therapy was no longer the business of psychiatrists alone; nor could it be confined to individuals. In an influential essay published in the same year, the sociologist Lawrence Frank took the position that society itself was the patient.

It is significant that this consensus took shape in the '30s, when the designers of an emerging welfare state were trying to convince the public that poverty and unemployment should not be attributed to lack of individual enterprise, that the system (not the individual) was at fault, that dependence on public relief was no disgrace, and that self-help was an illusion. The first step toward economic recovery and social justice, it appeared, was to "absolve the indi-

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vidual from guilt," as Frank put it. To the chagrin of reformers, however, many Americans, even those victimized by unemployment, clung to an ethic of self-help and refused to acknowledge the state's responsibility to relieve suffering or the individual's right to relief. For liberals, the debates touched off by the Depression and the New Deal appeared to confirm the wisdom of therapeutic as opposed to ethical analysis of social problems. The "conception of a sick society in need of treatment," according to Frank, was far more useful than conceptions stressing "human volition, human autonomy, and individual responsibility."

This has remained the dominant view, right down to the present day. It has come to be widely shared even by "religious and ethical groups," singled out (along with lawyers) by Frank as bastions of the old ethic of individual accountability. As Nichols says, the contemporary church is just as "enlightened" as the helping professions. "Pastors ... speak out about healthy self-esteem....You wouldn't have heard this twenty years ago." His description of pastoral speech is accurate enough, but his memory is much too short. The clergy began to see the light a long time ago. The social gospel, an important influence in American Protestantism since the turn of the century, had prepared them for the idea that society is the patient. Henry J. Cadbury, a critic of the social gospel, observed in 1937 that it had become the "staple diet of American liberals," who "affirm with one voice that society, not individuals merely, is the subject of redemption." Thirty years later the Harvard theologian Harvey Cox argued in *The Secular City* that "the achievement of health in place of neurosis on the individual level cannot be separated from the restoration of wholeness to the entire society." Freud "concentrated on the sick individual in his therapy," Cox complained; but the sick individual could no longer be treated apart from the "sick society."

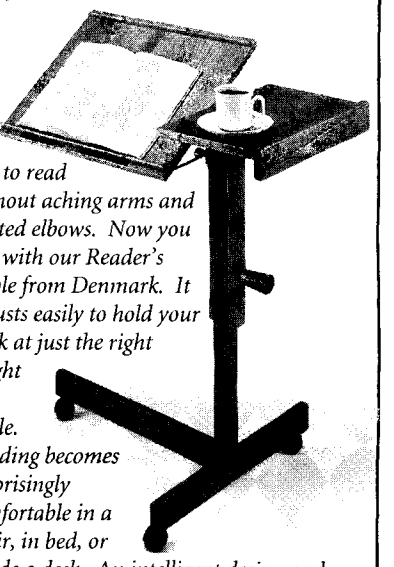
Low self-esteem is merely the latest form of social pathology commending itself to specialists in the cure of souls. It should not surprise us when the new pathologists of shame announce that a "more articulated theory" of shame, in the words of Michael Lewis, has "applicability to the social as well as to the individual level." Lewis readily embraces the cliché that blacks and women are "shamed by the culture in which they live," in need of "understanding rather than humiliation." Raising their self-esteem, he thinks, would "eliminate many social problems." "The solution I propose," he writes, "is a cognitive-affective program designed to reduce shame."

Gloria Steinem, like Lewis, dwells at length on the social implications of low self-esteem, especially in women. Feminists have criticized her new book as a retreat from political involvements, but it is better understood as another plea to the effect that politics and therapy are indistinguishable. It is completely consistent with the dominant brand of liberalism, a liberalism obsessed with the rights of women and minorities, with gay rights and unlimited abortion rights, with the allegedly epidemic spread of child abuse and sexual harassment, with the need for regulations against offensive speech, and with curricular reforms designed to end the cultural hegemony of "dead white European males." "Social justice," as liberals have come to define it, now refers to political therapies intended to undo the unwholesome effects of "authoritarian," "patriarchal" attitudes and to prevent anyone from "blaming the victim." The therapeutic discovery of shame finds its political expression in remedial programs administered by caretakers professing to speak on behalf of the downtrodden, but concerned above all to expand their own professional jurisdiction. Steinem's "revolution from within" does not signal a flight from politics, only a continuation of politics by other means.

Her therapeutic assault on shame requires political action for its completion. As a salutary example, she recommends California's Statewide Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem. She maintains that although journalists and politicians have ridiculed this noble experiment, it showed that almost every social problem can be traced to a failure of self-esteem. Self-contempt, the task force discovered, was a "primary causal factor" in "crime and violence, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, child and spousal abuse, chronic welfare dependency, and failure to achieve in school"—the "very problems," Steinem adds, that "Americans fear most."

She does not bother to explain how the California task force arrived at this finding—that is, by ignoring the reservations that were advanced by the experts on whose testimony its report was based. Papers prepared for the task force repeatedly spoke of the "paucity of good research" linking low self-esteem to social pathology, but the chairman of the body, John Vasconcellos, dismissed these reservations on the grounds that they came from "those who only live in their heads, in the intellectual." The importance of self-esteem, he said, was

Lay Down Your Arms



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confirmed by "our intuitive knowledge."

Steinem says nothing about the controversy surrounding the Vasconcellos report. It is enough for her that California's dubious example has been initiated by other states and by California's fifty-eight counties, almost every one of which now has its own task force on self-esteem. She, too, prefers to rely on "intuitive knowledge." Her book overflows with it. Children, she explains, should "feel loved and valued from the beginning." Most of us, however, were ignored or abused as children, and since we all "continue to treat ourselves the way we were treated as children," we therefore abuse ourselves as adults. But a "unique and true self resides in each one of us," the discovery of which will set us free. "The moment we find the true reason for some feeling that has an irrationally powerful hold over us,... the spell is broken."

It is hard to see how anyone could take such stuff seriously, but it commands automatic assent in many quarters and it provides much of the rationale for an expansion of the welfare state. That liberal "activists," as Steinem refers to them admiringly, now find themselves reduced to such slogans may indicate that welfare liberalism is suffering from terminal fatigue. Is it really necessary to point out, at this late date, that public policies based on a therapeutic model of the state have failed miserably, over and over again? Far from promoting self-respect, they have created a nation of dependents. They have given rise to a cult of the victim in which entitlements are based on the display of accumulated injuries inflicted by an uncaring society. The politics of "compassion" degrades both the victims, by reducing them to objects of pity, and their would-be benefactors, who find it easier to pity their fellow citizens than to hold them up to impersonal standards, the attainment of which would make them respected. Compassion has become the human face of contempt.

Democracy once meant opposition to every kind of double standard. Today we accept double standards—as always, a recipe for second-class citizenship—in the name of humanitarian concern. We hand out awards indiscriminately, hoping to give the recipients the illusion of accomplishment. Having given up attempts to raise the general level of competence, we are content to restrict it to the caring class, which arrogates to itself the job of looking out for everybody else. The professionalization of compassion does not make us a kinder, gentler nation. Instead it institutionalizes inequality, under the pretense that everyone is "special" in his own way. And since the pretense is transparent, the attempt to make people feel good about themselves only makes them cynical. "Caring" is no substitute for candor.

If psychotherapy has failed as politics, most recently as the politics of self-esteem, it has also failed as a replacement for religion. The founder of psychoanalysis believed that men and women would outgrow the need for religion as they came to depend on their own resources. He was wrong about that, as it turned out. Still, his kind of therapy encouraged introspection, and it aimed at moral insight; and it was not entirely unreasonable, therefore, to suppose that psychiatry could take over the healing functions performed by priests and confessors—performed very clumsily at that, according to Freud.

For some time now, however, the psychiatric profession has been moving toward therapies aimed more at behavior modification than insight. Whatever it has gained in the management of symptoms, often with the help of drugs, has been achieved at the expense of introspection. This trend may be regrettable, but it is easy to see why psychoanalytic therapies, in their classic form, no longer have much of a following in the profession as a whole. They cost too much, last too long, and demand too much intellectual sophistication from the patient. Even the most enthusiastic admirers of the psychoanalytic method might be disconcerted to read that one of Wurmser's patients "abruptly" broke off analysis "in the 1,172nd session." Another patient of Wurmser's remained in analysis for eleven years. Still another "eventually killed herself by jumping off a bridge." When psychoanalytic treatment threatens to become interminable and often ends in failure, sometimes after years of intensive self-exploration, both doctors and patients understandably turn to methods promising fast relief, even at the price of deep understanding.

At its best, psychoanalytic theory exposes the moral and existential dimension of mental conflict; but even then it cannot compete with religion. Wurmser's book on shame, a work in the grand tradition of psychoanalytic speculation, reminds us that psychoanalytically informed interpretation can reclaim ageless moral wisdom and deepen our understanding of it. Reading Wurmser, we see why shame and curiosity have always been so closely linked in people's minds, why shame ought to evoke feelings of awe and reverence, and why it refers, above all, to the irreducible element of mystery in human affairs.

But this very depth of moral understanding, so compelling at the level of moral theory, can also render psychoanalysis useless not only for therapeutic purposes but also as a guide to the conduct of life. The more it infringes on the territory once occupied by religion, the more it invites unflattering comparisons with its rival. Can psychoanalysis really do anything for people who suffer from an inner conviction of "absolute unlovability"? Maybe religion is the answer after all. It is not at all clear, at any rate, that religion could do much worse. •

Harry of Sunnybrook Farm

BY RONALD STEEL

Truman
by David McCullough

(Simon and Schuster, 1,117 pp., $30)

When Harry Truman left office in 1953, he was considered a failure: a little man of short temper and narrow vision in a job that was too big for him. By the mid-1970s, however, his stature had risen, or the public's expectations of leaders had fallen, to such a degree that the incoming Republican president hailed him as a model. Today he is firmly enshrined in the pantheon of American heroes, beyond reproach, and, judging from David McCullough's 1,000-page valentine, suitable only for veneration and framing.

There are several reasons for this. One, of course, is that, contrary to Brutus, the good that men do lives after them, while the bad is oft interred with their bones. Dwight Eisenhower, pilloried while in office, is now viewed as the benevolent monarch of a golden age. Another is the iron law of rising recollections, by which the stumblings of every

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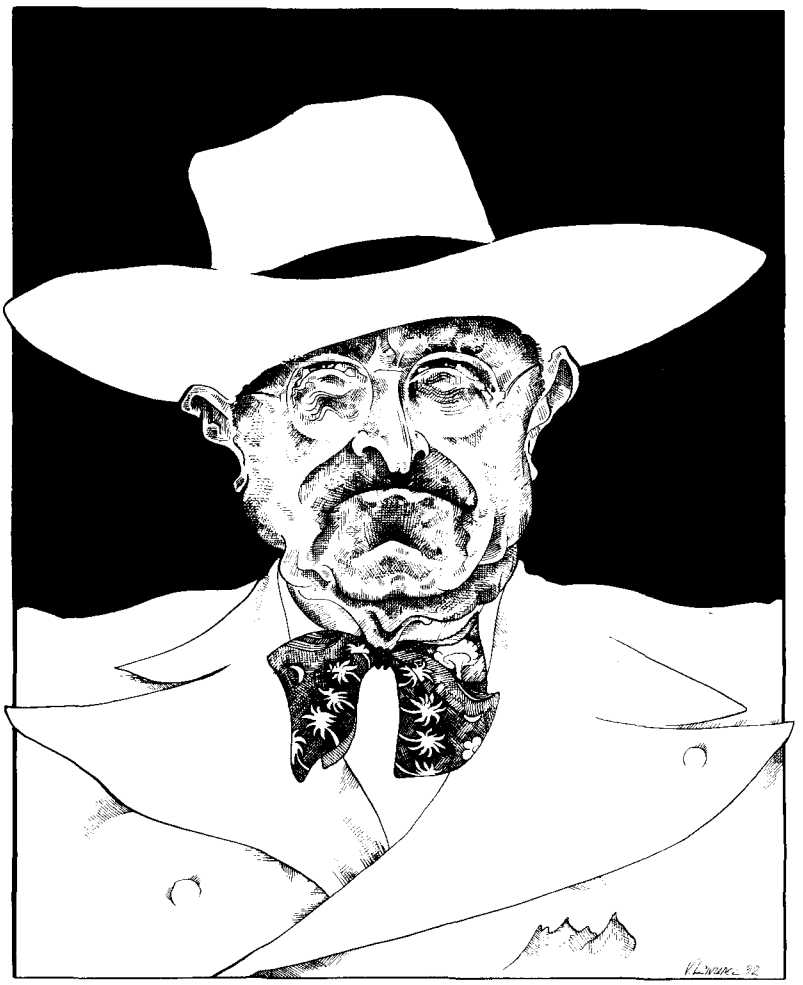
sitting president make his predecessor look good. Consider, if you will, the current resurrection of Richard Nixon. (Even Jimmy Carter is now poised for the revisionist's brush.) And then there is the appeal of a plain-speaking, apparently simple man from the prairies who promises to turn government back to the people. Thus the erstwhile rise of Ross Perot, who, even down to the squeaky voice and the short fuse, was presented as a Truman who knew how to succeed in business.

Curiously, there has been no full-scale biography of Truman that analyzes his character and relates it to the critical decisions that he made. Instead we have had political assessments of his presidency and a gaggle of tender accounts of his wit and wisdom. McCullough has taken on Truman's life with obvious enthusiasm. He clearly admires his subject, which is not a bad thing for a biographer, and wants his readers to think well of him, which is easy to do so long as one doesn't ask too many questions. And McCullough doesn't. The result is a chatty tale, intermittently interesting but dragged out to such length that it tries even McCullough's considerable narrative skills. Though it will enhance Truman's reputation for common sense and decency, it doesn't tell us much about the real man who hid behind the facade of the plucky hayseed, or about how his character influenced his political decisions. In these multitudinous pages, though, some tantalizing clues lie buried.



HARRY TRUMAN BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

With the pace of the main street of Independence, Missouri, on a Sunday afternoon in August, McCullough takes the reader on a leisurely saunter through Truman's 88-year life. Beginning with various ancestors and a history of the American heartland, he eventually has Harry delivered by a local sawbones (for a fee of $15, we are told) and embarked on a Booth Tarkington existence. Truman told us himself, and McCullough seems to take at face value, that he had the "happiest childhood imaginable." We are informed about the name of his dog and cat (Tandy and Bob), his joy in reading and playing the piano, that he "liked his first-grade teacher, Miss Mira Ewin ... his second-grade teacher, Miss Minnie Ward," and indeed "*all* his teachers." He also "adored" his little sister Mary Jane. To sum it all up, he "liked being Harry Truman." In fact, he liked just about everything, including Josef Stalin ("I like Stalin," he wrote his wife, Bess, from Potsdam), and even serving in the trenches in World War I, for the "truth was that he was happy under nearly any conditions."

What a blessing to be so easily pleased. And yet, beneath all this treacle, one gets glimpses of a different childhood that may not have been so happy. By Truman's own admission, he was "kind of a sissy" who ran away from fights and had few friends. Other boys laughed at him for his glasses, his piano lessons, his bookishness, and above all for being such a mama's boy. As one who loved music and reading, who didn't like sports and clung around home, he was marked as an outsider. He was never close to his father, a high-stakes speculator who preferred his boisterous younger brother, John Vivian. Yet Harry showed no outward sign of rebellion against either his domineering father or the small-town values that marginalized him. He was dutiful to the point of docility.

The Truman family teetered on the brink of respectability: sometimes reasonably well off, other times in poverty. Its fortunes hinged on the erratic business dealings and machinations of a man always eager to make a quick killing. When John Truman gambled away everything, including the family house and farm, on stock market speculations, Harry gave up thoughts of college and without complaint worked at a succession of menial jobs to help the family. When he finally landed a job he liked as an assistant teller at a bank in nearby Kansas City and was living on his own, his father, again fallen on hard times, ordered him to resign and to return home to work his grandmother's farm. There he remained for the next eleven years, all through his 20s, presumably never complaining about the sacrifice of his own career to his father's speculative follies.

This account of filial devotion is heartwarming but leaves some troubling questions. Did he really never feel anger or frustration under the domination of a disapproving father who forced him into a farmer's life? What psychological toll did this subordination take on him? Was he as happy being Harry Truman dirt farmer as he was being Harry Truman teacher's pet? McCullough, who enjoys telling stories but shuns motivation, avoids speculation about what may have been going on in Truman's head during this period. But the challenge should not be so casually shirked. As the Truman scholar Alonzo Hamby, in a perceptive essay on Truman, suggests, "It is hard to escape the feeling that the death of his father was a liberating experience that finally gave Harry Truman a chance to function as an adult."

The first thing that Truman did after his father's death was to imitate him, by making wild speculative investments in the hope of getting rich fast. He tried

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zinc mines, then oil leases, and later a haberdashery. They all went bust, and he lost his money. At 33 he was stuck on the farm with no visible avenue of escape. Salvation came in the form of America's declaration of war on Germany. Although old enough to avoid induction, and working in a critical occupation as food supplier, he promptly joined the National Guard, leaving his unwed sister the burden of running a large farm. Commissioned as an officer, he was sent to France, led a unit into battle, won the respect of his men, and for the first time in his life succeeded at something important.

Returning to Independence unscathed, he at last married, in June 1919, Bess Wallace, the woman he had been courting for nine years. Until their courtship began in 1910, when he was 25, there had been no woman in Truman's life. This is a touching tale of true love and persistence. Yet it strikes an odd note even for those less licentious times. McCullough suggests no reason for the young man's absence of romantic interest during the ten-year period beginning with his adolescence, but surely it is a situation that invites some biographical speculation.

After their honeymoon, the newlyweds moved into a room in the house of Bess's mother. A strict Episcopalian with social pretensions, this formidable lady considered the Baptist Trumans to be an inferior breed, would not tolerate blacks or Jews in her house (including Harry's haberdashery partner Eddie Jacobson), and insisted that her ex-farmer son-in-law not stain the family's dignity by being seen cutting the grass. She insisted that her daughter continue to live at home, and neither Bess nor Harry challenged her. Years later their daughter Margaret explained that her father "made it his business to get along ... because he loved my mother and this was where she wanted to live." And this is where she remained much of each year, even when he was senator and president. It is not surprising that there is a whole book of Harry's letters to Bess, since during much of their marriage she was in Missouri, tending the mother who never did believe that Harry was worthy of her daughter.

It is hard to understand the anomalies and the seeming contradictions of Truman's character without confronting the stifling social conventions of a small town like Independence, the smug self-satisfaction of a family like the Wallaces, the painful and incessant strivings of the Trumans to enter the local elite, the concern about propriety that inhibited natural feeling and governed social convention, and the desperate fear of economic failure. In his bucolic picture of small-town America, with its ice cream socials and its folks just rockin' on the front porch, McCullough seems unaware of how much towns like Independence, Missouri, resembled Winesburg, Ohio.

For an ostensibly simple man Truman was also a social striver who cared a great deal about money. *Bella figura* was as important to him as to any city dandy. He liked cars and fancy clothes, and later, we are told, he actually owned dozens of suits. Even as a farmer he bought a hand-built car that cost enough to hire two men for a year. Although this concern for money did not, surprisingly, drag him into corruption, it did lead him, like his father, into get-rich-quick schemes before and after the war. Both he and Bess, McCullough writes of the clothing store venture with an Army buddy, "wanted money quite as much as in the years before the war and saw the partnership as the opportunity, while at the same time keeping contact with his 'boys,' the city, and people of a kind who might do him good should politics ever become his 'line.'"

High times were soon succeeded by depression, and after three years the store went into bankruptcy, leaving Truman with debts that he would be paying for fifteen years. Fortuitously, in 1922 Truman was offered a job by the Pendergast machine—the powerful combine that controlled Missouri politics through graft, corruption, prostitution, and speakeasies—as a county judge. This post was administrative rather than judicial, and was useful to the machine because it controlled the county purse strings. The job was offered at the suggestion of Boss Tom Pendergast's nephew Jim, whom Truman knew from the Army. Did he have any compunctions about working for the machine? Apparently not, for McCullough tells us that he accepted their offer "at once, without hesitation." It was a good career move for a man who had failed at just about everything else. Harry needed a safe, well-paying job, and this one did just fine. The machine provided the necessary votes to transform the failed haberdasher into Judge Truman. He served for eight years, faithful to his benefactors but, we are told, untainted himself by corruption or scandal.

His sights raised by public office, Truman hoped to run for Congress, but the Pendergasts had given the seat to someone else. However, they had a consolation prize. After being turned down by three other candidates, they offered him the United States Senate. Though less known than his two competitors in the Democratic primary, he squeezed through with a plurality of 40,000 votes—his victory assured by the 137,000 votes he had garnered in Jackson County, home base of the Pendergasts. In 1934, at the age of 50, he took his seat in the hallowed chamber, viewed by one and all as the senator from Pendergast.

He had a hard time shaking loose from this reputation, especially in his defenses of the machine—as in 1938, when he denounced a Kansas City district attorney who had unearthed proof of vote fraud, insurance bribes, and income tax evasion by Pendergast. The U.S. district attorney, Maurice Milligan, was an ally of Governor Lloyd Stark, an enemy of the Pendergasts. The evidence was damning, and Roosevelt backed Milligan, but when his term expired Truman tried to block Senate confirmation of his reappointment. From the floor Truman defied FDR and showed his loyalty to the machine by denouncing Milligan, the federal judges in Kansas City, and what he called a "rabidly partisan press." He was the only senator to vote against reappointment. McCullough, who rarely criticizes his subject, describes this as Truman's "worst moment in the Senate," a time when he "seemed out of control, grossly overreacting." Pendergast, for his part, ended up in Leavenworth for tax evasion.

Two years later Truman announced that he would support St. Louis party boss Bennett Clark for the Democratic presidential nomination against Roosevelt. A conservative isolationist and an alcoholic, Clark was nonetheless the key to Truman's own re-election bid for the Senate. That help was crucial. Truman won the election by 8,000 votes out of 655,000 cast. His margin in eastern Missouri, where Clark controlled the machine, made the difference. Over the next four years he repaired his fences with party chiefs and with Roosevelt. By 1944 he seemed an inoffensive candidate for the vice-presidential nomination in Roosevelt's bid for a fourth term. Party leaders, fearful of Vice President Henry Wallace, whom they considered woolly-headed and excessively liberal, and concerned that James Byrnes's record on race as a Southern senator would hobble the party in Northern cities, pressured an ailing FDR to accept Truman as his running mate. At the con-

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vention, McCullough observes, "as so consistently through the Truman career, it had been the system of politics, the boss system, that counted in deciding his fate."

According to the Truman folklore, his accession to the presidency on Roosevelt's death in April 1945 was a bolt from the blue. "I felt like the moon, the stars, and all the planets had fallen on me," he is often quoted as saying. But in fact it was hardly a surprise at all. The major opposition to Wallace at the convention had rested on the fear that Roosevelt was likely to die in office. Yet though Truman had reason to be forewarned, he was unprepared and uninformed because the president had kept him in the dark on matters of grand strategy.

Roosevelt could hardly have died at a less opportune time. The victory against Nazi Germany meant that political decisions about the future of Europe—which FDR had deliberately kept open to avoid dissension among the Big Three allies—could no longer be postponed. Lacking Roosevelt's knowledge and finesse, fearful of appearing indecisive and ignorant, Truman did what was natural to his temperament: he adopted a pose of forceful bravado. Pushed by Averell Harriman, who was bombarding him from Moscow with dire warnings of Soviet intentions, he permitted an unnecessary and disruptive confrontation at the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco, and abruptly ended Lend-Lease shipments to Russia while the war was still going on. When liberals criticized him for having gone too far, he backpedaled by holding out olive branches. Though he had good reason to be suspicious of Soviet intentions, he had no consistent policy, and he was whipsawed by his advisers. Relations between Washington and Moscow were on a merry-go-round that continued until the cold war moved into high gear toward the end of 1946.

The most important decision made by Truman came at the very beginning of his presidency: the unleashing of atom bombs on two Japanese cities. Historians have been mulling over the meaning and the consequences of that decision ever since. Was not Japan already defeated? Would an invasion really have been necessary? Why insist on unconditional surrender since the Japanese were already extending peace feelers? Why not wait and gauge the effect of Russian entry into the war? All of these questions have been raised and none of them has been conclusively answered.

McCullough states that Truman "never seriously considered not using the bomb," and saw it as simply another weapon that would speed the end of the war. The aim was not exactly to defeat Japan, for it had in effect already been defeated. Rather, "it was Japan's surrender that was so desperately wanted." Perhaps the Japanese might have been forced to an early surrender by other methods, but "no one close to Truman was telling him not to use the new weapon," and he seems to have had no compunctions himself. In fact, Truman never even made an additional decision about using the second bomb against Nagasaki. It was simply launched when weather conditions permitted. Was the decision influenced by an eagerness to end the war before the Russians entered? Or, even more, as revisionists have claimed, was it intended to moderate Soviet behavior in eastern Europe and make the Kremlin more amenable to American designs for the postwar world? McCullough rejects this latter contention by stating that at Potsdam "there was no intimation ever of a 'hammer,' no flaunting of power, in his dealings with Stalin." But he does not really engage the issue, examine the psychological basis of Truman's behavior, or come to grips with the considerable scholarship concerning Truman's use of the bomb.

The question is not whether the revisionists or the traditionalists are right. A biographer is not obliged to resolve that old dispute. But he should do more than skim over the surface of the argument, and he should tell us what it was about Truman's character that led him to behave as he did. Was he dominated by his advisers? Did he believe that an invasion was really necessary? Why was he so indifferent to the concerns of those scientists who counseled against use of the bomb? Why did he reject Secretary of War Henry Stimson's counsel to accept less than unconditional surrender? Was he oblivious to the magnitude of his decision and what he had unleashed? Did he really lose no sleep, as he said, over his decision to obliterate Japanese cities, and if so, why not? Although McCullough graphically recounts these events—he is a great scene-setter and storyteller—he does not go behind them to delve into Truman's character and to explain why, being the person he was, Truman behaved as he did. Despite a huge amount of detail about the paraphernalia of his life, Truman remains maddeningly opaque. He emerges as a man who often acted forcefully, but whether he acted in this manner from conviction or from pressure remains unclear.

Historians in recent years have given favorable marks to Truman's foreign policy, citing such landmarks as the Truman Doctrine, the Berlin airlift, the Marshall Plan, the creation of NATO, the building of the hydrogen bomb, and the decision to repel Communist aggression in Korea. These were indeed

INTENSITIES & ANALOGIES

by A.R. Thurar

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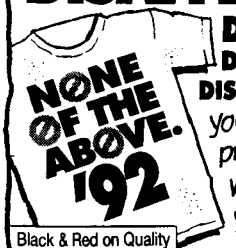

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far-reaching actions, and they gave the cold war the shape it maintained for the next four decades. Some of them were not popular at the time, and a number have been disputed since. But the watershed event of the Truman presidency was certainly the Korean War. It transformed the vague rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine into a blueprint for interventions against communism that set the precedent for Vietnam and the proxy wars of the Reagan era. It also cast a revealing light on Truman's vaunted reputation for decisiveness.

Following the North Korean invasion of the South in June 1950, Truman first sent air and naval forces, and a week later the U.S. Army, to repel the aggressors. The North Koreans were soon driven back to the 38th parallel with relatively few American casualties. Rather than being content with victory, Truman, strongly influenced by his secretary of state, Dean Acheson, decided to invade the North and destroy the Communist regime. There was considerable temptation to do this. The administration, under assault from Republicans for having "lost" eastern Europe, sought to show that it could "liberate" a Soviet satellite. General Douglas MacArthur was given the green light to push north.

As MacArthur's armies reached the Chinese frontier, Beijing warned that it would intervene if they came closer. Acheson ridiculed the threat, and MacArthur was allowed to continue. Then the Chinese surged south in force, inflicting terrible losses on the American-led forces, nearly driving them into the sea, and prolonging the war until 1953 along the 38th parallel where it had all begun. The administration blamed the disaster on MacArthur, who sought to redeem his military defeat by extending the war to China. But it was Truman, one eye on the Republicans, who had ordered him to proceed. His administration never recovered from this bungled victory. Its last two years in office were a disaster, as casualties mounted and political stalemate hardened. From this atmosphere of defeat and frustration McCarthyism was born.

McCullough relates the Korean War as a story of a president besieged, one who did the right thing and suffered through no fault of his own. But there is more to the story than that, for it is also one that touches on a central element of Truman's character, that is, his fear of appearing weak and indecisive. He was renowned for making unconsidered judgments: his threat to use atom bombs in Korea, his seizure of the steel mills during a strike, his attempt to draft striking rail workers into the Army, his denunciation of a music critic who had the temerity to criticize his daughter's singing ability. McCullough cites several unsent letters written by an infuriated Truman to those who had incurred his displeasure. They sound like the rantings of a taxi driver. Truman's short temper revealed a man who easily took afront at those who questioned his judgments or his abilities. Erupting from beneath his affable exterior were the fears of a man intent on concealing feelings of inadequacy.

These fears came not only from being catapulted into a job for which he was unprepared, but also from a background where his family sought a social respectability that remained elusive. Truman's lifelong concern with propriety and show—his rich man's car as a farmer, his band box grooming, his worry over what was "proper," his insistence on protocol and being granted respect—are manifestations of his insecurity. Acheson, who knew how to play on Truman's hunger for respect, won his undying gratitude by being the only person to greet him on his return to Washington after the Democrats lost the 1946 congressional elections. Although McCullough touches on Truman's hypersensitivity to criticism, he draws no revealing links between it and a past marked by drift, immaturity, business failure, and social anxiety.

This is because he is less interested in peeling away character than in telling a tale. He devotes a full 100 pages to the election of 1948 and even twelve pages to the redecoration of the White House. The decision to create NATO, by contrast, gets two pages—which is about the space devoted to a Florida vacation during which Harry popularized floral sports shirts. God must lie in the details, for McCullough tells us that each morning Truman's mother-in-law ordered by phone a meal consisting of "baked Virginia ham, standing rib roast, warm bread and old fashioned biscuits, baked sweet potatoes, fresh vegetables in season, cakes, pies, peach cobbler," and that of all delicacies "Harry particularly liked corn bread and Missouri sorghum." (Other culinary information includes the menu at Potsdam, where Truman invited Stalin to a dinner consisting of "creamed spinach soup, liver and bacon, baked ham, julienne potatoes, string beans, pumpernickel bread, jam, sliced fruits, mints, candy, cigars, which Stalin declined, and a California wine that he went out of his way to praise.")

McCullough's approach tends to the architectural rather than the archaeological, to construction and embellishment rather than deconstruction and revelation, as befits one who has written so engagingly on the Panama Canal and the Brooklyn Bridge. Aside from its excessive length and its numbing accumulation of trivia (if an editor's pencil ever touched this manuscript, it is well concealed), McCullough's prose is direct and serviceable. Only occasionally does he stumble into coyness, as when he tells us that "for Harry, whose world, through the new eyeglasses, had only just come into focus, the next few years were to be

An Aspen Grove

All agitation, flinches, quiverings—
life is unrest among these skittish things.

Something gave them a scare once. In a flock
they scurried up this hillside nubbed with rock

until they reached this ridge, a firm redoubt.
Here they could take a stand, and face about,

catching their breath, still trembling. Where's their pride?
Glimpses of lily-livered underside

flitter for all to see; the merest breeze
triggers the timorous spirit of such trees

to make each leaf a manifest of fright.
Are they assailed with terror of the height

they cluster in? Or, still, of what below
routed them up the slope so long ago?

That river down there wriggles like a snake . . .
Why are we tempted, even now, to make

a link to legend? Manning their lookout, we're
tapping the veins of some far older fear

than any that would set us now astir.
And no, we're not afraid now. But we were.

ROBERT B. SHAW

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a time of great adjustment," or that despite 100-degree temperatures at the Army camp, "only Harry Truman appeared untroubled by the heat, a peculiarity that would be noticed often in times ahead."

Truman is remembered as much today for his aphorisms as his policies: "The buck stops here," "If you can't stand the heat stay out of the kitchen," and the like. Such slogans are endearing in a time of plastic politicians who make a career of ducking responsibilities and welshing on commitments. They hark back to a simpler time when a man's word was his bond, when a promise was not simply a misunderstanding, when lying was more than just "misspeaking." No wonder we sentimentalize Truman.

Still, without the mist, the rosy lenses, and the theme music, neither Truman's career nor his administration was quite so inspirational. He stumbled into politics after years of business failure, advanced by loyal service to a corrupt machine, became president by inheritance, unleashed the atom bomb without seriously considering alternatives, instituted a witch-hunt program within the federal government, proposed a doctrine that inspired decades of ideological crusades, involved the nation in a war with China that he could neither win nor end, and presided over the transformation of a political contest with communism into a global struggle for military supremacy that consumed the nation for the next forty years.

His record, like that of most presidents, was a mixed one, and it does no good either to our current politics or to a useful history to embellish him as a plaster saint. He was a decent man of limited talents who surmounted handicaps of temperament and parochialism to perform honorably in a job for which he was little prepared. It is a mark of our present distress that we have hoisted him to levels that he neither claimed or deserved. Somewhere deep beneath the surface of Truman the icon lies another, more interesting Truman the man: angry, insecure, obstinate, ambitious, resentful, short-tempered, gutsy, determined, honest, shrewd, vain, and wily. But the key to that Truman will have to be found elsewhere than in the thousand pages of this genteel entertainment. •

Beauty and the Beast

BY DENIS DONOGHUE

Dignity and Decadence: Victorian Art and the Classical Inheritance by Richard Jenkyns

(Harvard University Press, 363 pp., $29.95)

In England, as elsewhere, there have been two traditions in modern interpretations of Greek art and thought. The first is drawn mainly from Winckelmann, Herder, Humboldt, Goethe, and Heine, and culminates in Matthew Arnold. According to this line, the high culture of Greece in the period between the sixth and the fifth centuries B.C. is animated by childlike innocence, ideal beauty, nobility, equanimity, and reserve. In England, for this reason, Victorian public schools maintained Greek and Latin at the center of the curriculum, so that those values might be inculcated, despite the positivist claim of science. Arnold refers to "the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity" of early Greek genius and implies that this tone issues from the best experience that human life can give. Henry James, too, endorsed this sense of classical peace. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, we find Isabel Archer looking at the beautiful blank faces of the Greek statues in the Capitoline Gallery in Rome; and James comments that "it is impossible, in Rome at least, to look long at a great company of Greek sculptures without feeling the effect of the noble quietude; which, as with a high door closed for the ceremony, slowly drops on the spirit the large white mantle of peace."

Arnold contrasted this mantle of peace with the fretfulness and irritability of later Greece when the influence of the Sophists began to prevail. In that decadence, as he says in the preface to his *Poems* (1853), "The dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust." Arnold regarded modern Britain as needing precisely the intelligent poise that he found in the classics of Greek culture: it was there still to be emulated. The touchstones of poetry—from Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton—which he produced in the second series of *Essays in Criticism*, testified, he assumed, to some changeless human spirit, to the highest sense of life as such, independent of historical contingency. "It is this chiefly which gives to our spirits what they can rest upon."

In *On Translating Homer* (1861) he attacked Francis Newman's translation of the *Iliad* not merely because he deemed it sordid, but because Newman's declared sense of Homer's style as "quaint, garrulous, prosaic, and low" tended to undermine the *Iliad* as a force in English cultural life. "Search the English language for a word which does not apply to Homer," Arnold said, "and you could not fix on a better than *quaint*, unless perhaps you fixed on one of the other three." His assault on Newman, in short, had the same purpose as his *Culture and Anarchy* and *Essays in Criticism*: to bring over from other cultures, especially from Greece, Rome, Germany, and France, the particular values that modern Britain lacked, notably "sweetness and light," the continuous application of intelligence to the matter in hand.

But there is that second tradition in the interpretation of ancient Greece, and it is a revision of the first. Nobility and equanimity are acknowledged as supreme qualities of the Greek mind, but the revisionists also point to the irrational forces in Greek religion and myth. Burckhardt, Pater, Nietzsche, Frazer, Gilbert Murray, and many other writers, notably E. R. Dodds in *The Greeks and the Irrational*, have made as much of Dionysus as of Apollo. Dionysus, Pater says, is a Chthonian god, "and, like all the children of the earth, has an element of sadness; like Hades himself, he is hollow and devouring, an eater of man's flesh—*sarcophagus*—the grave which consumed unaware the ivory-white shoulder of Pelops." Pater emphasized the violence of Greek culture—the Bacchic women, "dreadful Persephone, the goddess of destruction and death." Veering from Arnold without even naming him, he held that the familiar view of Greek art and religion is partial, since it proceeds "as if Greek art had dealt exclusively with human nature in its sanity, suppressing all motives of strangeness, all the beauty which is born of difficulty, permitting nothing but an Olympian, though perhaps somewhat wearisome calm."

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What are the facts?

■ The concept of "land for peace" is a totally new one in the history of the world. It was formulated for one specific purpose only, namely to persuade and pressure Israel to give up territories that it has administered since the Six-Day War of 1967. By its victory in that war, Israel wound up in possession of these territories. Contrary to what many are led to believe, the "West Bank," the focus of today's attention, had never been part of any Arab country. It was part of Palestine, a territorial unit that, by the Mandate of the League of Nations and in line with the Balfour Declaration, had been designated as a national home for the Jewish people.

■ Thus, while the concept of "land for peace" is a brand-new one, the concept that to the victor belong the spoils is as old as history itself and had really never been questioned before the days of the Israel-Arab conflict. Our own country, of course, following its Manifest Destiny, has benefited greatly and has consolidated its territory by applying this motto. But Israel followed a different path. From the day of victory in 1967, it waited for an offer of peace from the Arabs. But that offer never came. Instead, immediately following the war, the Arabs pronounced their three unalterable "no's:" no recognition, no negotiation, and no peace with Israel.

■ In 1977, President Sadat of Egypt traveled to Jerusalem and presented a peace plan to the Israeli government. The Israelis eagerly embraced his suggestion. In exchange for peace and normalization of relations with its neighbor, Israel returned to Egypt the vast Sinai peninsula, together with the city of Yamit; some of the most advanced military installations in the world; the port and naval installations of Sharm-el-Sheik, which safeguard Israel's access to its port of Eilat; and the oil fields that Israel had developed and which had made Israel self-sufficient in its energy requirements. And, of course, Israel also gave up the natural buffer against aggression that the Suez Canal and the strategic depth of the Sinai itself provided. It was a first in history. Never before in the chronicle of mankind had the victor returned conquered territory to the vanquished in order to attain peace.

■ One would expect that the concept of "land for peace" would work both ways. After all, should not the Arabs also make some territorial sacrifices for peace? Unfortunately, that is not the case. Every inch of land held by the Arabs is considered "holy Arab soil" and its possession by the "infidels" (Christians or Jews) is inadmissible, intolerable, a blasphemy and a case for "jihad" (holy war). No compromise, no concession is ever possible. The way the "Taba issue" was finally resolved further illustrates the Arab belief that the "land for peace" principle is basically a one-way street.

■ The "land for peace" formulation is now applied mostly to the Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and Gaza regions. Israel's foes, but also some of its friends, urge Israel to yield these regions to the Arabs, in exchange for "peace." But there is no peace, and no peace will come about by Israel's giving up this area of vital strategic importance to those who are its sworn enemies and who have declared over and over again that they wish to use this land as their launching pad for the final attempt at the destruction of Israel. The conflict in the area is not only between Israel and the "Palestinians." It is first of all between Israel and the Arab nations. With the single exception of Egypt, virtually all of them are still in a state of war with Israel.

To none of the Arab countries has the possibility ever occurred of *their* trading land for peace, for instance yielding the "West Bank" to Israel for the sake of peace. Not one of these countries has even hinted that they would make peace with Israel if Israel yielded the administered territories to the Arabs. There isn't even a gesture of accommodation, such as a lifting of the over 40-year-old Arab economic boycott against Israel, an apology for the odious slander that Zionism is Racism, or a discontinuation of the yearly charade in the United Nations, in which the Arab states attempt to expel Israel from that body. For the victor to yield land for peace to the vanquished is a new idea—who knows, it might even be a good one. But it surely would have to work both ways in order to be valid and effective.

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In his new book, Richard Jenkyns, a classicist by training and conviction, examines the influence of Greece upon Victorian painting, sculpture, and architecture. He moves through the artifacts of Victorian Britain with Greek forms in mind, and vividly describes what he sees. He is alert to the two traditions in interpreting ancient Greece when he describes Victorian choices between the classical style and the gothic style. By gothic he means, as everyone does, the style of architecture prevalent in western Europe from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, characterized mainly by use of the pointed arch. Like Arnold, Jenkyns associates the classical style with purity of form and "austere virility," a phrase I recall from his widely acclaimed *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (1980), a study of Greek ideas and forms in their bearing upon Victorian England, in which Jenkyns examined a force of cultural history, "the influence of Greece upon England," and a corresponding sentiment, "the English attitude to Greece."

In *Dignity and Decadence*, Jenkyns's prime example of Victorian gothic is the Albert Memorial in Kensington Gardens, London; of Victorian classicism, St. George's Hall in Liverpool. Each entails a revival rather than the assumption that "architecture grows, as it were organically," from the society that creates it. Jenkyns thinks that revivalism begins in "that archaism which so often arises in elaborate, oversophisticated societies." But he finds it hard to say what any particular form of revival means. He considers social explanations of style dubious: "changes of taste may come from whim or chance or the game of follow-my-leader." He acknowledges the rival interpretations of Greek culture and their bearing upon these questions. But his own prejudice is with Arnold rather than with Pater.

On Jenkyns's evidence, Victorian architects adopted the classical style or the gothic style for no grander reason than personal taste. Both styles were available, with various forms of ornament and allusion. In church architecture, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches were normally gothic, while Congregationalists, Baptists, and Nonconformists went Greek. Schools and colleges were gothic because the founders and the benefactors were eager to assert the religious basis of education in an age increasingly secular. Ostentatiously secular buildings were done in the Greek style, but architects held themselves free to do what they liked or whatever their patrons required.

William Wilkins's aesthetic infidelities

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were typical of his profession. He designed University College, London, in Greek, but changed to a gothic style for his work at King's College, Cambridge. And at Downing College, Cambridge, he reverted to Greek for "entirely aesthetic" reasons; that is, because he took it into his head to do Greek. Pugin was a Catholic and therefore a Goth. Ruskin was all for Venetian gothic. But these filiations, it appears, can only be ascribed to the artist's temperament:

> How far, we may ask, did social attitudes or social background affect the choice of style? How gratified the historian would be if we could show that the aristocracy (say) tended to the gothic and the *nouveaux riches* to the classical. But he must face disappointment. The high aristocracy went gothic at Eaton Hall and Cardiff Castle, but gothic Tyntesfield was built on a foundation of bird droppings: the Gibbs family were small gentry who had made money in guano. Royal Osborne was Italianate, but so was Prestwold Hall, built for a Leicestershire squire.... With private houses we seem to find no fit between style and social class.

On the whole, Jenkyns regards the classical revival as more considerable than the gothic—especially in literature. "It is hard to think of a major Victorian whose imagination owed more to the Middle Ages," he claims, "than to the classical world (there were of course great Victorians whose imagination owed nothing to either; Dickens for one)." Again, he describes but can't explain. His most vivid chapters give the major figures and their work as if he were giving a lecture-with-slides and inviting his audience into experiences mainly picturesque. We are introduced to Pugin, Nash, Leighton, Beardsley, Playfair, Cockerell, Soane, Ruskin, Alma-Tadema, and Burne-Jones as if each offered an interest intrinsic rather than exemplary. We are led so quickly from one visual image to another that we hardly raise our hands to ask the lecturer what these images portend.

The show is splendid, and it has every merit of diversion short of the highest thoughtfulness. There is a fascinating chapter, for instance, on Victorian renderings of the Pygmalion story, which as Jenkyns notes is probably not Greek but the invention of Ovid, and we are churls if we think there is more to be said. The king who pleasured himself by lying with a statue is shown to have become an allegorical charm to nineteenth-century mythographers of the creative imagination as well as to artists: fascinating, again, but as someone asked of *Paradise Lost*, "What does it prove?" Jenkyns has fine commentaries, too, on Alma-Tadema's *The Sculptor's Model*, Watts's *The Wife of Pygmalion*, and Burne-Jones's Pygmalion pictures; and his story veers into decadence with John Davidson's *Earl Lavender* and Jean-Leon Gerome's *Pygmalion and Galatea*.

The book is also rich in social detail, as in glowing passages about Bristol, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and other cities. And yet it is disappointing that Jenkyns has been unable to give larger considerations and reasons. In a few instances, he tries hard. Pugin, as a case in point, claims that gothic is the true Christian style, classicism being pagan:

> The inverted torch, the club of Hercules, the owl of Minerva, and the cinerary urn are carved, in lieu of saints and angels, on the tombs of popes, bishops ... and warriors, frequently accompanied by Pagan divinities, in Pagan nudity; the pious supplication for a prayer for the soul of the departed is changed into a long and pompous inscription detailing his virtues and exploits.

That is at least a consideration. Jenkyns thinks Pugin wrong about gothic, but right about classicism. Classical ornament, Jenkyns says, is "a symptom of worldliness, of Christian faith gone watery." Not a persuasive claim. On his own showing, a Victorian architect could go Greek one day and gothic the next. I still wonder why.

It is reasonable to assume that there is some relation between feeling and form, but it is hard in a given case to say what the relation comes to. The reason that Jenkyns can describe but cannot explain may be that at some point in Victorian Britain the relation between feeling and form became arbitrary, or otherwise casual. Sir George Gilbert Scott, who designed the Albert Memorial, was a Goth, but he didn't scruple to run off a design in the Italianate style favored by his patron Palmerston. We want to learn more about him than that he was a rascal and an opportunist.

And so I wish Jenkyns had stopped the slide projector long enough to take up the question of meaning. There are precedents for such patience. In *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, Henry Adams took the time to show how the gothic of the Cathedral of the Virgin of Chartres is related to the faith that provoked it and the movement of mind that made its composition possible. "Every day, as the work went on, the virgin was present, directing the architects," he says without a trace of extravagance. Again, in a passage on the pointed arch, Adams refers to "the broken arch, our infinite idea of space; the spire, pointing, with its converging lines, to unity beyond space; the sleepless, restless thrust of the vaults, telling the unsatisfied, incomplete, overstrained effort of man to rival the energy, intelligence, and purpose of God." And Pater, in an essay on Notre-Dame d'Amiens, refers to "consolidation of matter naturally on the move, security for settlement in a very complex system of construction—that is avowedly a part of the gothic situation, the gothic problem":

> And then, in contrast with the classic manner and the Romanesque survivals from it, the vast complexity of the gothic style seemed, as if consciously, to correspond to the richness, the expressiveness, the thousandfold influence of the Catholic religion, in the thirteenth century still in natural movement in every direction.

Adams and Pater may have been wrong in points of interpretation, but they worked in a context in which it was still possible to ascribe meaning to relations, operative at some earlier moment, between one force, one value, and another. Jenkyns's book, so good for so much of its way, gives in to persiflage at the end: he can only make a flourish, when all the evidence has been given, out of not quite knowing what it comes to. Perhaps the problem is that Jenkyns doesn't know who his readers are, or how far he can go with them. His style is informal, but he expects readers to understand what pendentive, finial, entablature, anthemion, and algolagnic mean. Yet he avoids facing the possibility that his whole subject is opaque.

One problem, I speculate, is that forms, when they lack any vital relation to the forces from which they ostensibly arise, become unmoored, unhinged, arbitrary. Revivalism in the nineteenth century, whether of classical or gothic style, was the practice of not having to understand; of doing something else rather than understanding. Allusion was a device for filling spaces that could not be comprehended. Leavis said of Conrad, with the windy insistence of *Heart of Darkness* in mind, that he is intent on making a virtue out of not knowing what he means. That predicament started in Victorian Britain. The English novel is the crucial genre of that age because novelists tried to devise a language capable of understanding the new forces with which they had to deal. Aestheticism was one form, one sad form, of the discovery that most of life could not be understood, it could only be lived.

DENIS DONOGHUE holds the Henry James Chair of English and American Letters at New York University and is completing a book on Walter Pater.

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NEW YORK DIARIST

Speeding ticket

ON THURSDAY, JULY 9, THE PRESIdential campaign of Bill Clinton ascended to the mystic plane of political satori, where, with ever-mounting bliss, it remains. That was the day Clinton chose Al Gore to be his running mate, a metaphor the two have since made literal with their daily tandem jog. Even those of us who thought the choice of Gore would be a good one had no idea it would turn out to be a magical one. The whole ticket seems to be vastly greater than the sum of its two parts. The unlooked-for synergy of the Gore choice ignited the campaign for its breathtaking acceleration through a nearly perfect convention and on into its sequel, the triumphal bus tour (if that's not an oxymoron) across the Rust Belt. In picking Gore, Clinton rejected balance, that false god of politics (and journalism), in favor of amplification and consistency—harmonic convergence, you might say. Balance, at least of the conventional kind (regional, ideological, generational), is an act of cautious calculation. Amplification is an act of self-confidence, of clarity. The one aims for equilibrium, the other for dynamism. Of course, it helps when what is being amplified is youth, energy, intelligence, and open-mindedness.

NOTHING ACTUALLY HAPPENED AT the convention in the way of concrete events except parties and speeches. The best of the former must have been one I missed, though Monday night's boozy reunion of old McGovernites, where Arnold Schwarzenegger, son-in-law of McGovern's No. 2 No. 2 Sargent Shriver, stood bicep by jowl with a succession of diminutive lefties, was pretty good. The best of the latter was Mario Cuomo's nominating address for Clinton. The libretto had some brilliant lines; the music, however, was the thing, and it was grand opera. As in his national debut during the 1984 season, Maestro Cuomo used his Italian baritone to devastating effect. The most striking aspect of his performance, also as in '84, was his effortless control of the audience. With outstretched palms and sinuous body movements he played the crowd like a resonating instrument, damping and releasing its roars as if touching the pedals and pistons of some great cathedral organ. All admired the Cuomo speech; but unlike eight years (or eight months) ago, few indulged fantasies of "if only." By now we know this Pavarotti will never be Rudolph Bing. The difference is that in 1984 Cuomo showed the Democrats something they otherwise lacked; his masterfulness contrasted with the party's lassitude. In 1992 his speech was an act of feudal fealty, an expression of Clinton's power rather than his own.

THERE WAS NOTHING SMALL-D democratic about this convention. Democracy had had its day in the primaries, in which Clinton got a higher percentage of the vote than any candidate for an open Democratic nomination in history. At normal Democratic conventions, once the wounded have been dispatched, the bitternesses deepened, and the police sent back to their barracks, the survivors comfort themselves with the thought that their sprawling, fractious, riotous, chaotic party is a wonderful reflection of the sprawling, fractious, etc., American people. This time, the Democrats had no need of such solace. The convention was simply a show of force. The ostensible "message" was that the Democrats are now the party of (enlightened) middle-class values and interests. The meta-message was this: Clinton and Gore can govern the party. Therefore they can govern the country.

EVERY DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION has its emotional high point. Two stand out in my memory: the 22-minute ovation for Robert F. Kennedy in 1964, and the closing tableau of racial and regional healing in 1976, when the first ever nominee from the Old Confederacy stood surrounded by blacks and whites singing "We Shall Overcome." This year's festivities had nothing to match either of those in political meaning or depth of feeling. The 1992 high point was light and joyful: it came when Gore, buoyed by music and applause after his acceptance speech, swept the divine Tipper into his arms for a dance. And why not? The speech had been good by any standard, awesome by Gore-in-'88 standards. Unlike Clinton's shapeless, endless mess, which stopped just short of being bad enough to spoil the convention's by then firmly established story line of unmitigated success, Gore's address was crisply written. And well delivered: the Gore who called down thunderbolts upon the Republicans in Madison Square Garden was not so much wooden as Woden. I wept buckets during Gore's recounting of his son's near-fatal accident. It didn't occur to me at the time that there might be something exploitative about it, or about the avalanche of intimate details set forth in the two acceptance speeches and the films preceding them: not just Gore's son's ordeal and Gore's sister's death from lung cancer, but also Clinton's father's death in a car crash before he was born, his stepfather's drunken violence against his mother, his separation from mom at age 3, her breast cancer, how he met his wife and proposed to her, what his daughter looked like ("all sqwunched up") as she emerged from his wife's womb while he watched, how he took care of his wayward brother, and, of course, how his daughter reacted to his and his wife's televised discussion of their marital difficulties. You can't really blame Clinton and Gore for foisting all this on the public. The "character issue" is there, the "family values issue" is there, and they must be dealt with. The fact that we have to hear about young Bill Clinton threatening to coldcock his stepdad is an unintended consequence of the press defenestration of Gary Hart four years ago. The problem is that once all the "positive" personal stuff that supposedly attests to good "character" gets trotted out, it becomes harder to argue that the "negative" personal stuff is none of anybody's business.

ONE THING'S FOR SURE: IF FDR were running today, his aides would wear little gold wheelchairs on their lapels. And John F. Kennedy's 1960 acceptance speech, written under 1992 conditions, would have sounded less like Cicero and more like Geraldo. No doubt it would've started out with a vivid description of precisely how his brother Joe was killed in World War II, tying that in with the theme of sacrifice as well as the need to find peaceful solutions. Then a couple of grafs on his mentally retarded sister, Kathleen, and how her plight brought all the members of the family closer together while sensitizing them to the issue of community-based health care. Something about the candidate's chronic back pain as a metaphor for economic suffering, and a line or two about how his experiences as a recovering cortisone addict deepened his commitment to making drug treatment available to all who seek it. Nor would a reference to how much he had learned about compassion and understanding from living in a dysfunctional family with an intermittently pro-Nazi dad be out of place, along with a candid acknowledgment of the now-overcome troubles in his own marriage. The strumpet summons us again, not as a call to bare harms. . . .

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

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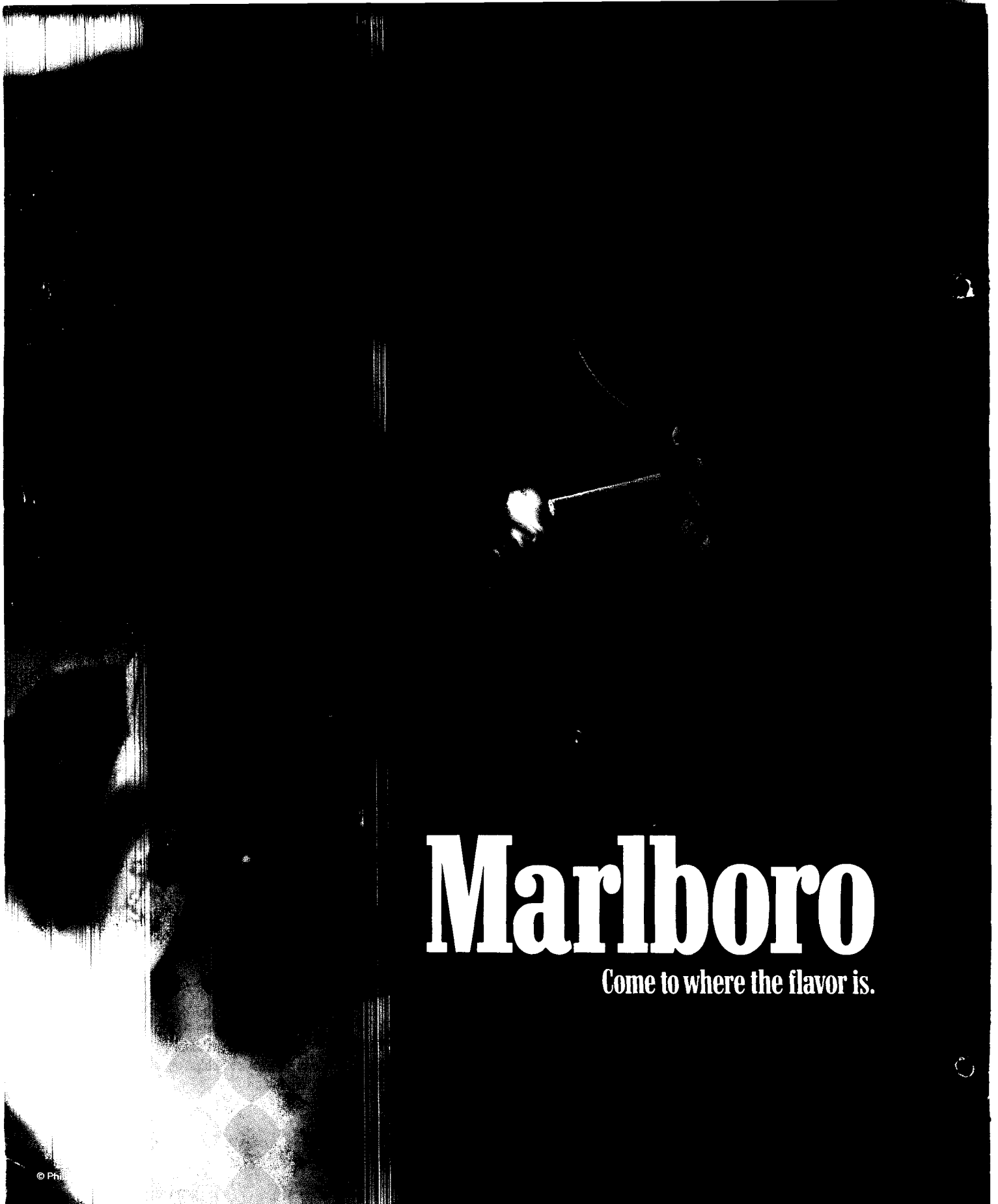

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